

# FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

Number 107 June/July 1992

(unwaged 30p) 50p

## OPPRESSED REVOLT AGAINST INJUSTICE



## LA—the rage undammed

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SOLIDARITY  
PRICE £1

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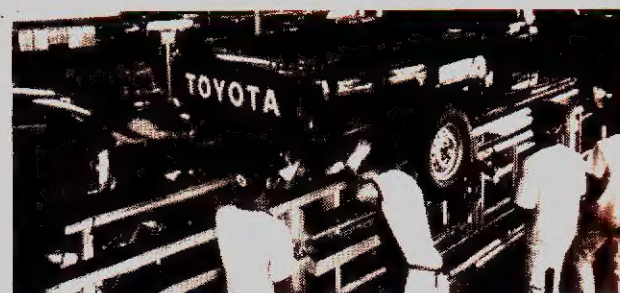
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# Facing the future

Today it is not enough simply to reaffirm the historical justification for socialism as a response to the restoration of capitalism in most of the ex-socialist bloc. We must now begin to contribute to the revival of the communist movement on an international scale.

The shock experienced by communist organisations which identified with the historical experiences of the socialist countries and the Bolshevik heritage, must now be put behind us. Communists everywhere need to gather their ideological strength, their cadre and their political support for the task of reviving the communist movement internationally.

The time is also ripe for the re-evaluation of many of the existing historical alignments of communist organisations in order to initiate a well-defined, open debate on the restructuring of an international movement on a solid basis.

Marxism-Leninism is not a dogma or a set of unchanging political truisms, nor is it a political position which we defend solely as a reaction to imperialist triumphalism. Marxism in its most developed and substantial form in the epoch of imperialism - Leninism - is defensible precisely because it allows us:

1. to offer a scientific critique of the capitalist system in its imperialist phase; and
2. to show the necessity of socialist revolution and the building of socialism to solve the fundamental problems facing the vast majority of humanity.

The collapse of the socialist regimes created ideological and political turmoil among the left to such a degree that no political tradition within Marxism-Leninism can claim complete historical justification for its past political standpoint. However it is possible, even at this stage, to draw a clear line of demarcation between forces on the left which opposed, to one degree or other, the counter-revolutionary process taking place in the ex-socialist bloc and those which welcomed it.

## A clear line of demarcation must be made...

During the counter-revolutionary process, European social democracy with its roots in the Second International joined the imperialist ideological and political assault against the socialist countries under the guise of promoting 'democracy'. In this respect, social democracy, in all its variants, reconfirmed its counter-revolutionary historical mission.

New left intellectuals and nearly all Trotskyist organisations (SWP, Militant, RCP etc in Britain) and some anti-communist libertarian socialists tried to exploit the imperialist conquest of Eastern Europe as though it were a justification for their own ahistorical positions of separating socialism from any concrete historical process. In practice they ended up in the same camp as social democracy.

Many of both the officially recognised traditional communist parties and their mirror opposites, the anti-Soviet Maoist parties contributed to the same trend either by shifting to social democracy or participating in the imperialist ideological attack on the socialist regimes on the ground that such regimes were 'state-capitalist' or 'social-imperialist'.

All these positions were vigorously reaffirmed on the eve of the counter-revolution. So it is clear that such organisations and parties are unable to contribute to the revival of the communist movement simply because they identified willingly with the counter-revolutionary process.

## Let us clarify our differences...

In contrast to the above trends there are different ideological currents stemming from different traditions which have rectified, or are in the process of rectifying, their mistakes of the past. What they all now share in common is a recognition of the counter-revolutionary character of the process which led to the collapse of the socialist countries. These trends include:

- 1 Parties which sided with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in its dispute with the Soviet Union in the 1960s but when confronted later with the concessions made by the CCP to imperialism, reassessed and rejected their earlier 'Three World' theory and 'social imperialist' labelling of the Soviet Union.
- 2 Officially recognised pro-Soviet communist parties which later opposed post-war Soviet concessions to imperialism, eg the standpoint of peaceful coexistence as it developed into Eurocommunism and opened the path to counter-revolution under the leadership of Gorbachev.
- 3 Central American and Latin American communist parties which now recognise the lead and example of the Cuban revolution. Many of these parties were ideologically hampered by their relations with the Soviet Communist Party and missed crucial revolutionary initiatives. In this context it is important to note that the Cuban Communist Party, while recognising the historically progressive role of the Soviet Union, is taking a quite different path in confronting the economic and political problems of Cuban socialism to that taken in the Soviet Union. The rectification process in Cuba aims at strengthening socialist economy unlike perestroika which introduces capitalist methods

and capitalist social relations.

- 4 In rare cases some organisations which formerly regarded Albania as the unique socialist country, and later gained a broader conception of the world socialist experience.
- 5 And finally some organisations which could be defined by their 'anti-Stalinism' and an idealist understanding of 'world revolution' which have become aware of the reactionary role of Trotskyism referred to earlier.

The categorisations are not exhaustive and inevitably new Marxist-Leninist trends have appeared, and will continue to appear, which do not easily fit into the above framework. To these must be added anti-racist, anti-imperialist, socialist currents in the liberation movements and the small anti-imperialist communist organisations in the imperialist countries. None of the latter have generally been part of the traditional Marxist-Leninist trends discussed above.

We have to recognise the fact that a new international communist movement cannot be established by reducing it to the extension of one of the above categories or a rectified form of them by simply correcting the political errors or one-sidedness of the different political trends. It will have to relate to the concrete political issues and struggles confronting the communist movement internationally as the struggle for socialism unfolds. It is clear that no party or organisation has the legitimacy to dominate others, to determine the composition of the international movement or attempt to censor the discussion in any way within a Marxist-Leninist framework. Every organisation must clarify its positions and examine its adequacy in relation to the need to revive the communist movement internationally.

## Some progress is being made...

Around the world communist organisations are already trying to develop their contacts with other organisations. Recent events include: a meeting of communist parties and revolutionary organisations held in Brasilia on 10 and 11 February 1992; the Symposium of Communists and Progressives of Europe held in Madrid between 1 and 3 November 1991; the meeting of communist organisations held in Pyongyang on 15 April 1992; and the meeting of some Marxist-Leninist organisations in Belgium at the beginning of May 1992. The latter was attended by the RCG and a fraternal organisation in Turkey which produces the newspaper *Iktidar* (Power). A report of this

meeting and material from a Japanese communist organisation and an interview with a representative from a German communist trend are produced elsewhere in this issue.

However it should be said that no international platform has been able to gather together a majority of forces having the potential to contribute to revival of the communist movement internationally. Many revolutionary and communist organisations have not participated in the international meetings held by the more established organisations. A framework must be developed so they can participate.

Communists have a responsibility to take immediate steps to create such a political framework and the open political discussions and frank dialogue in order to elaborate and develop it.

We believe that as a starting point the potential forces which can start to create such a political framework should involve parties, organisations and socialists who:

- believe in the validity of socialism as the only alternative to capitalism and aim to overthrow the capitalist system by revolutionary means
- accept that the Bolshevik revolution represents the major historical alternative to the imperialist system
- see the continuity of the militaristic, aggressive and exploitative character of capitalism and imperialism
- challenge ideologically the Gorbachev-promoted 'new thinking', Eurocommunist and market-socialist standpoints
- oppose the capitalist restoration in the ex-socialist countries and defend existing socialist countries against counter-revolution
- seek to break politically and organisationally with every section of the ruling class and fight to build an independent communist movement in every country
- will fight for the unity of the working class and oppressed peoples of the world against imperialism and for socialism.

Finally we must be aware that at the present time the conditions and discussions are neither developed nor mature enough to merit an organisational structure at an international level. But the period we are living in demands from communists open, sincere, and principled discussion so that we can prepare the way for this.

Communists must now create the framework for open, sincere and principled discussion. ■



The Hokkai brought 80 tons of lubricants from Mexico; Cuba also received food, medicine, machinery, construction and school materials from Asturias, Spain

## Cuba

# US imperialism tightens blockade

On 18 April the Bush Administration responded to the surge of international solidarity with Cuba by endorsing an intensification of the US blockade of Cuba, in defiance of international law.

CAT WIENER

The draft legislation, proposed by Democrat senator Robert Torricelli, will prohibit the access to US ports of any boat trading with Cuba without special permission. This violates internationally recognised laws of the sea which prevent any state from imposing pressure, coercion or any other limits on the open maritime trade and the freedom of navigation.

Around the world, solidarity campaigns are sending ships filled with medicines, powdered milk, oil, grain and other necessities to Cuba to break the embargo. This action reflects a degree of political support which is urgently needed: however, it is clear that mobilisation on a far wider scale is still essential if the embattled Cuban economy is to survive.

Support is coming from China, from Australia, from Spain - but particularly from Latin America. On the day Bush announced the tightening of the blockade, 222 representatives from 27 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean met at the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) to repledge their solidarity with the Cuban revolution and draw up a plan of action which includes an international campaign to send fuel and school materials to Cuba; to collect signatures opposing the US blockade and calling for recognition of Cuba's sovereignty and an end to political and military action. As poverty, disease and misery intensify in the rest of Latin America, socialist Cuba has the potential to become the lynch-pin of struggle against US imperialism. In the words of the Dominican delegate, 'to defend Cuba is to defend Latin America and the Caribbean.'

This unity creates something of a dilemma for the Bush administration. With an election in the offing, and facing a challenge from the right, Bush is anxious not to be seen as 'soft on Cuba'. At the same time, he does not want to provide the impetus that would push Latin American countries, already sympathetic to Cuba, into open hostility. For this reason, he opposed the section of the Torricelli Bill that

proposed cutting off aid to Latin American countries who trade with Cuba.

More insidious is the propaganda war being waged by imperialism to create a political climate which permits the stepping up of the US's economic stranglehold on Cuba, while keeping alive the possibility of a Panama-style military attack. To this end, the media lackeys of papers such as the British *Guardian* and *Independent* trot out once again the hackneyed lies: 'Cuba stays out of US war on cocaine trade', with articles implying that Cuba is a safe haven for drug traffickers. No matter to these hacks that Cuba's offer to the US to collaborate on drugs information was time after time ignored - so that even a Republican senator was driven to cry out in frustration 'For God's sake, it is drugs not communists that are killing our children!' No matter that the US administration is itself deeply implicated in the laundering of drugs money from Latin America; that when General Ochoa was convicted of involvement in drug running he was shot (but then, of course, our hypocrites change their tune to one of 'human rights'). They choose not to write about the Cuban ship illegally stopped and searched by Mexican coastguards who found - nothing. Most of the 'evidence' relied on comes from the group of viciously reactionary Cuban exiles living in Miami, professional counter-revolutionaries who have sold their souls for dollars - so that even Washington Cuba policy experts are forced to concede 'Washington is highly suspicious of reports coming out of Miami'. Yet the rumours are fomented, providing the excuse for incursions into Cuban airspace and waters, and 'intelligence gathering'.

Meanwhile, in Cuba, as the first fruits of the agricultural programme began to appear on the shelves, potatoes, tomatoes, bananas, gradually being supplemented by material aid from Mexico, Australia and Europe, the Cuban people took to the streets in their tens of thousands to celebrate May Day and loudly proclaim their defiance of US imperialism and their support for Cuba, for the Revolution, and for socialism. ■



# Counter-revolution triumphant

25 April saw the culmination of 14 years of imperialist-backed counter-revolution in Afghanistan as the forces of the Islamic Jihad Council took power in Kabul.

BOB SHEPHERD

The ruling Homeland Party, formerly known as the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, racked by divisions, had ousted President Najibullah from its leadership on 16 April. It had lost effective control of strategic areas of the country as sections of the armed forces had defected to the Mojahedin. The collapse of socialism in the old Soviet Union had meant an end to military aid to Afghanistan and a weakening of the power of the armed forces. This had led Najibullah to agree to a UN peace plan for Afghanistan, which proposed that power pass to a council of 15 'neutral' Afghans at the end of April, followed by the formation of a transitional government. The defection of sections of the armed forces to the counter-revolutionary Mojahedin undermined the position of Najibullah and sealed the fate of the Afghan government.

Since the revolution of April 1978, imperialism had set its sights on the destruction of the progressive government in Kabul. They were intent on restoring to power the feudal landlords and capitalists who had held the Afghan people in bondage. Reagan and Thatcher financed and encouraged the development of the Mojahedin.

In 1978, before the Soviet intervention of 1979, the CIA had established 30 bases for training Afghan terrorists. They received more financial backing from the USA than the contras in Nicaragua, over \$2bn from the CIA in ten years. The targets of the Mojahedin were schools, hospitals, agricultural and industrial projects. Between 1981 and 85 they destroyed nearly 2,000 schools, 30 hospitals and 100 health clinics. The war has devastated the country with over one million dead and five million refugees in Pakistan and Iran.

After the Soviet intervention to defend the gains of the revolution in 1979, imperialism used the dirty war of the Mojahedin not just to undermine the Afghan revolution, but as a weapon against the Soviet Union itself. As the US ambassador to Pakistan between 1988 and 1991 put it: 'Afghanistan is the place where the Reagan doctrine paid off... The unravelling of the cold war began there.'

Before the 1978 revolution, Afghanistan was a desperately poor, backward country. 85 per cent of the population lived on the land and felt the brunt of poverty. 40 per cent of all arable land was owned by four per cent of the population. Over 50 per cent of peasant families were in massive debt to landlords and



Fighting in Kabul after splits in the Mojahedin

moneylenders because their landholdings were too small to make ends meet. The per capita income of Afghans was just \$157 a year in 1978.

Only 0.65 per cent of the GNP was spent on health care: with only one doctor per 15,000 people, life expectancy was 42 years for men and 43 for women. Afghanistan ranked 119th in the world in terms of health care, and 127th in the world in terms of education. The illiteracy rate before the revolution was 98 per cent: in the ten years before the revolution 5,265 people had learnt to read and write!

Immediately following the revolution, the government of the PDPA issued laws which enshrined in law equality between men and women and banned forced marriages. For the first time women were elected onto

local bodies of power. The government instigated land reform, putting a limit on an individual's right to private ownership of land, and cancelled peasant debts. All nationalities were granted equal rights and prestige, with education taking place in the language of national minorities.

All these measures were detested by the reactionary Mojahedin and were the targets of their attacks. Now they have taken power, all the progressive laws introduced by the PDPA will be reversed. A reactionary, anti-communist regime in Kabul is already attacking women's rights and has begun the slaughter of communists. Karim Shardan, former chief minister of justice, was kidnapped, tortured and murdered in Kabul on 3 May. Abdul Ghorbandi, a lead-

ing member of the Homeland Party, was also kidnapped, but rescued the same day. On 8 May, leader of the Jamiat-i-Islami Party Rabbani announced the formation of special tribunals to try people accused of 'killing and torturing fellow Afghans' during the years of the PDPA government.

Afghanistan is entering a dark period of its history; the valiant attempts by communists organised in the PDPA to instigate progressive and democratic reforms have for the moment failed. Whatever faction of the Mojahedin comes out on top in the struggle for power, if any does, will mean death, suffering and poverty for the vast majority of the Afghan people. The reality of imperialism's 'new world order' will be there for all to see in Afghanistan.

## Philippines elections

TREVOR RAYNE

The 11 May election will further undermine the legitimacy of the Philippine state. Five days after the vote the likely winner of the presidency is Fidel Ramos. Ramos is former head of Marcos' Presidential Constabulary; switch of allegiance was tactical to Aquino's coming power in 1986. As Aquino's Defence Minister, Ramos was crucial in the defeat of several coup attempts. Aquino endorsed Ramos' candidacy. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, former judge and immigration commissioner, has won considerable support by attacking corruption of the Philippine political establishment and Ramos' closest rival. Her People's Reform Party was denounced as 'watchers' at the polling stations and she has charged election fraud and threatened to extend her claim to be heir of Aquino. People's Power by launching a campaign of civil disobedience if she loses.

Whoever wins will do so with just a fraction of the support Aquino had when she assumed the presidency. The land reforms and redistribution of wealth Aquino promised have not taken place. The destruction of the National Democratic Front and New People's Army, which were promised by 1986, have not taken place. Poverty has grown and the revolutionary forces and base areas remain in contact. With serious divisions in the Philippines' ruling class, US political and military representatives, supplemented by British SAS, will attempt to assert themselves as the power in the land. Their favoured front man is Ramos.

## The profit motive v. the Earth

MAXINE WILLIAMS

It is ironic that next month's Earth Summit should be taking place in Brazil - a country with the world's largest gap between rich and poor and whose ruling class organises the systematic murder of poor street children at the same time as it recklessly destroys the Rain Forest. In fact the killing of children has intensified in recent weeks to 'cleanse' the street prior to the summit.

It is already clear that, far from agreeing on any serious proposals to tackle the linked questions of the destruction of the earth's resources and its billions of poor, the Summit will produce empty declarations. President Bush set the tone for the response of the imperialists, those who bear overwhelming responsibility for the environmental catastrophe, when he refused to countenance measures restricting corporate pollution because it would damage US financial interests.

The fifteen most industrialised countries in the world produce 75% of its greenhouse gases and all, bar the US and Britain, have agreed to limit their emissions to the 1990 level by the year 2000. Even this rather dismal proposal is opposed by the US and Britain.

Without their agreement this target is likely to be dropped.

Underlying the fierce arguments which have taken place in the run up to the Summit is the division between rich and poor nations. The latter rightly believe that the rich nations, having profited mightily from despoiling the world, are now attempting to load even more burdens on to them under the banner of environmentalism. It has been estimated that the poorer nations would need to spend 2-3% of GDP to make an impact on the environmental problems that they face, often problems directly created by imperialist multinationals or indirectly by the imperialist-imposed poverty. This is money that they simply do not have.

An environmental fund has been set up by the World Bank and UN (Global Environment Facility) to support environmental projects but its funds are a pathetic \$1.3 billion. The poor countries point out that this fund is entirely dominated by US and other rich interests and that World Bank funding often involves measures which are disastrous both for the environment and the people of poor nations. Between them, the World Bank and the IMF actually take out \$6.5 billion from the poor nations each year.

But rather than accept respon-

sibility for this state of affairs, the rich nations have begun to concentrate on the issue of 'overpopulated' poor nations. Such concentration will encourage even more genocidal measures in the Third World. It is the poverty created by imperialist banks' debt repayment demands which prevents meaningful economic development in the oppressed nations, forces short-term measures and population growth. The rich nations are often abetted by local ruling classes in the oppressed nations which also loot national resources. Hence we should beware of those like the Malaysian spokesman, who used nationalist rhetoric to justify unbridled development in their own countries. For there is no doubt that he meant capitalist development which cares for neither the people nor the planet.

Many of those most concerned with environmental issues are driven to an understanding of the connection between poverty and environmental degradation. They also know that the seat of the disaster lies in the profit lust of the imperialist nations and their insatiable consumption of resources. Perhaps above all other issues, the survival of the earth highlights the need for the fair, planned and international use of resources. It is a solution which capitalism will resist to the death.

## Kurds fightback

TREVOR RAYNE

The national liberation struggle led by the PKK is growing in intensity with a combination of escalating guerrilla warfare and popular mass struggle. During the first week of May guerrilla attacks on Turkish forces were reported from the length and breadth of North West Kurdistan, from Aralik near the Armenian border to Nusaybin close to Syria and Cudi on the border of Iraq.

Three Turkish helicopters were shot down on Cudi mountain on 6 May. The Turkish army reportedly penetrated five kilometres into the so-called Allied-protected safe haven in South Kurdistan - Iraq. Neither Britain nor the USA protested.

Pressure from the Kurdish masses has forced 14 Kurdish MPs to leave the SHP (Social Democratic Party) to join Leyla Zana and Hatip Dicle as independents. Five Kurdish MP's of HEP (People's Labour Party) origin remain within the SHP and therefore within Demirel's coalition government. Letters and telegrams sent from within Kurdistan to the Turkish parliament stress that the coalition government has no support from the Kurdish people and has

handed authority to the (National Intelligence Organisation) and the National Security Council. The Kurdish MPs side the SHP hope to set up their own parliamentary group, this they need 20 deputies. Within Turkey on 5 May police raided the Patriotic Women's Association, located a poster proclaiming 'Long live May Day' written in Kurdish and Turkish, and closed their offices down. On 6 May Hatip Dicle was detained at Istanbul airport and prevented from travelling to Britain.

In the period since the March Newroz massacres (FRF 106), the British government has shown its willingness to support any measures by the Turkish state to try to suppress the Kurdish rising. A visit to Turkey, Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd referred to 'terrorist problem in the South East of the country' and sympathised, citing the British government's 'problems' in the Republic of Ireland. British imperialism has consistently colluded in colonial oppression of the Kurds, be it sending the SAS into Iraq in the 1970s or supplying Iraq with weapons in the 1980s. Now it rushes to the side of the Turkish state. All British support for Turkish colonialism must end. Victory to the PKK!



Spraying lime to stop the effects of acid rain



# Tinder box schools

The Tory-controlled London Borough of Wandsworth has announced plans for its three remaining comprehensive schools to offer a speciality subject along the lines of the Borough's City Technology College. The original decision was made during the general election campaign, but swiftly withdrawn in case the voters realised that this would effectively mean the reintroduction of a grammar/secondary school selective system. With the election over, the Tory council has reinstated the decision. SUSAN DAVIDSON surveys Britain's chaotic schools.

The plans for the schools are couched in appealing terms. One school, for example, could specialise in the performing and creative arts, another in languages and perhaps the third in technology. Parents, it is argued, can then choose where their 11+ children are to go.

Behind this appearance of choice and 'excellence' is the reality of streaming in all subjects from the ages 7-11, testing at 11+ and selective entry. These schools will in fact be separated into vocational and academic schools, better known as grammar and secondary modern schools.

Wandsworth, the 'Tory flagship' borough, aims to solve its schooling problems to suit the political posture of the council. But we cannot expect to see this move widely adopted. The chaos and confusion in educational policy inherited from the Thatcherite attacks is endless.

The decline of welfare-statism with its aspiration to universal benefits, rights and services, is affecting the compulsory 5-16 education sector. Local education authorities have been destroyed or weakened. Opting-out, which means direct grants from central government, has

been encouraged. A parallel system of City Technology Colleges in 'partnership and sponsored by private business' (some fantasy) is being set up and receives disproportionate grants.

But all this loosening of control, and encouragement of the school as entrepreneur, parents and pupils as customers, has to take place within the framework of an ever-tightening National Curriculum which comes from central government and is legally binding.

**'The remaining council schools could become the no-hope dumping ground for thousands of working class children'**

The result of this tight control at the centre and 'free choice' in the management of local schools is power without the responsibility for national educational provision by the government. Increasingly large-scale future plans, recruitment and salaries, and enrolment of students have become the responsibility of in-

dividual schools in competition with each other. It is a life and death battle because each school's finances ultimately depend on how many pupils it attracts, each sixth-former being worth the most money.

The real purpose of this strategy is to cut back on overall educational expenditure. This must be done in as deceptive a way as possible in order to divide and confuse public protest.

The government has succeeded in this aim. A recent OECD report concludes that real per pupil spending on education fell by 1.8% on average a year between 1980 and 1988. But the real cost of the government's frank dismissal of its responsibility to develop and maintain a rigorous and universal education system is to be found in the results. Britain does not produce sufficient skilled workers to keep it competitive internationally. In 1990 only 35% of 16-year-olds went on to further education as compared with 79% in the USA, 77% in Japan, 76% in Sweden and nearly 100% in Germany.

Of course as an old imperialist power, Britain calls on the resources of overseas investment to balance the books. But that



section of the ruling class that is based in the industrial and manufacturing sector of the economy is in a state of desperate concern about the poor level of skills training in the education system. This is an historic problem in Britain, where the status of vocational training and manufacturing skills has always been regarded as secondary to the academic university education of the elite.

The Wandsworth solution, however, is not going to be as easy as it seems. It would suit these particular reactionaries to use the National Curriculum Key Stage 2 test results as an 11+ entrance exam into vocational and academic schools. Unfortunately for these avid Tories who want to see the less-able, less-motivated working class children dumped, reality is more complicated.

The decade of Thatcher gave birth to a cult of business and management postures among the former social democrats of the trades unions, Labour Party and college graduates alike. All

are now imbued with an adapt-and-survive ethic in the spirit of the 'new realism'.

It is quite possible, therefore, that the three comprehensive schools will opt out of local control and, with their own boards of managers/governors, conduct their own business funded directly from Westminster. If 40% of local schools opt out, then it becomes financially unviable for local councils to retain control of the remainder.

At this point in time, of the 4,000 secondary and 21,000 primary schools, only 230 (some figures say 217) are opted-out, or grant maintained as they are also called. Yet indications show that another 2,000 schools plan to opt out in the next five years. In Bedfordshire Labour councillors are supporting a plan by the county's head teachers for a bloc opt out of 117 schools in order to protect the continued existence of the comprehensive system.

The 'positive side' of the new freedom from local council control has just been adopted by Tim Brighouse, Professor of

Education at Keele University. As part of the Left's new agenda in the wake of the election defeat, he is proposing that 'every school is a private school'. This must be the all-time best of the 'if you can't beat them, join them' school of thought.

The new Minister of Education, John Patten, is showing signs of unease as he faces the prospect of the total disintegration of the state schooling system and its replacement by a federation of individual and school consortia run by the heads and governors. His recent promise to send his own children to state schools and juvenile criminals to hell must be a result of his panic.

The recent experience of opted-out Stratford School, where the governing body is attempting to sack the head, is an example of the troubles ahead. Another is the growing reluctance of individuals to serve as governors where the tasks demand management and accountability skills and mean the unpleasant job of firing teachers to balance the books. Equally there are areas of the country where parents are demanding the resignation of governors who are blamed for understaffing and sacking teachers.

Most threatening of all is a prospect that Patten is fully aware of because he worked at the Home Office and knows that there has been a massive rise over the last ten years in crime and the criminalisation of juveniles. The remaining council schools could become the no-hope dumping ground for thousands of alienated working-class children, especially in the inner cities. Such schools could become the tinder boxes of future social unrest. Indeed, they should become so. ■

## Scandals

# Lloyds on the rocks

'Lloyds of London'. Just to utter the words would elicit nods of approval from three centuries of speculators willing to wager taking a share of any losses for a cut of the profits. Now the world's biggest single insurance market faces payments due on three successive years of losses, 1988-91. Amid cries of 'fraud', a melée of litigation and rumours of 4,000 bankruptcies, this emblem of the Empire, 'solid as oak', is on the rocks. TREVOR RAYNE surveys the wreckage.

### An agreeable income

*'My dear chap, there is no business in my experience where such an agreeable income can be earned in such agreeable surroundings with a minimum of output. It's a golden business. The underwriters sit there and see a good many brokers, agreed, but the amount of intellectual effort involved is small. It's the flair that counts.'* (A Lloyds' man quoted in Paul Ferris, The City)

Flair has rewards: a Lloyds' broker can earn £1m a year. Away from Lloyds' precincts they are accustomed to doing business over lunch at The Savoy. Underwriters, who take on the insurance, might expect a day at the races, ferried by helicopter, or for grander deals a golfing holiday in France, or perhaps a new car.

Lloyds now forms under 20% of the total London insurance market, but it is still the biggest marine insurer in the world, covering about 40% of the world's shipping. Other insurances offered include aviation,

motor vehicle, energy, property and pecuniary loss. Here, if you had a mind to, you could get parts of your anatomy insured, like Jimmy Durante's nose. But more likely to get insured are consignments of Brazilian coffee, Turkish figs, buildings, oil rigs etc. Lloyds is also Europe's biggest re-insurance market, where those who promise to pay on a loss re-insure against the risk of having to pay out.

Significantly, the USA accounts for two thirds of all Lloyds' business: a major balance of payments contribution. Insurance is by far the biggest contributor to British overseas earnings by financial institutions: approaching 50%. In 1989 insurance brought in £2.93bn of which Lloyds earned £660m, down from its 1987 contribution of £1.67bn. Between 1976 and 1987 Lloyds consistently accounted for over a third of overseas insurance earnings. Apart from being a blow to a major slice of British capital itself, a blow to Lloyds would reverberate throughout the insurance industry and on to the entirety of

British industry. In 1989 British insurance companies had invested assets worth £327.01bn, half of these held in stocks and shares.

### What's in a Name?

Members of Lloyds are known as 'Names'. Each application to be a Name is 'closely vetted' by Lloyds Council. When accepted, the Name, an individual not a company, deposits a minimum of £250,000 with Lloyds, though £500,000 is more typical. However, each Name promises to underwrite the risks insured not just with their deposit, but ultimately they are liable for 'the very shirts off their backs': that is, they face unlimited liability. Names are classed as 'working members' who are also underwriters at Lloyds or 'external members' who just make their capital available. The Names are grouped into Syndicates and each Syndicate has an underwriter who accepts or rejects the business proposed by the brokers. Many Names belong to more than one Syndicate and as a

general rule take profit or cover losses in proportion to the deposit submitted.

To be a Name was the stamp of financial integrity, the passport to almost every exclusive club in London. Prince Michael of Kent, the Duke of Norfolk, the Duke of Atholl (the only person in Britain allowed to keep a private army!) were Names. Of course, new subscriptions do mean a wider capital base from which to expand business and so the new 'aristocracy' were enrolled: Henry Cooper, Tony Jacklin, Edward de Bono, Sir Freddie Laker, Dame Shirley Porter, assorted comedians and chat-show hosts, and the customary men of integrity like Robert Maxwell and Rocco Forte.

With the 1980s' credit boom, a campaign to bring more members in to underwrite more business got underway. Heaven forbid, but one expedition reputedly recruited an extra 845 Names from a Georgia golf club.

### 'Structural rottenness'

Heady times, but then disaster struck. The 1987 storms brought in claims totalling £1bn; the Piper Alpha North Sea Oil rig explosion in 1988 generated the first £1bn industrial accident claim; Hurricane Hugo 1989 cost \$4.11bn, the 1989 San Francisco earthquake another billion, the Exxon Valdez another half billion... Many of the new Names, 'fresh money', just could not stand it. Who was to blame? Who would carry the losses? 'Not me - "fraud"!'" went up the shout, and the very Lloyds of London stood revealed as a den of squabbling thieves.

One Lloyds representative described the 1989 and 1990 results (claims which have still to be settled) as like 'two trenches full of black vipers'. If 1989 losses are put at £1.65bn, an estimate for 1991 shows losses of £4.5bn, a figure probably inflated by hysteria at the prospect of having to pay out anything at all. However, claims have to be met or Lloyds will shrink to a fraction of its recent turnover.

External Names accused working Names (underwriters) of heaping all the riskiest business onto Syndicates in which they predominate: effectively channelling profits into a select few Syndicates. An analysis for 1988 shows working Names losing an average of £4,300 each while external Names lost £10,300. A similar bias can be calculated for 1989.

Fraud has its traditional forms at Lloyds as elsewhere (see FRFI 106): brokers inflating claims, tax avoidance, not disclosing special interests, hiding premiums in offshore holdings and so on. However, this time the external Names have added a new crime to the annals, accusing working Names of 'churning'; that is, brokers taking a cut each time a risk is passed between Syndicates for which the underwriter gets a fee. The more the bits of paper are passed around, the better off they are: pure parasitism, with a certain flair.

By the Spring of this year, about 1,000 Names had sought injunctions to prevent claims on their assets and 1,000 had applied to the Hardship Committee to negotiate payment of their debts over the rest of their lives. In the US, litigations have spill-

ed into the courts where the claim is that the poor victims were misled. No violins please, they still keep good company.

About 40 Tory MPs are Names; it is not unusual for a Labour MP to make it. In February a delegation descended on Lloyds. They fed Labour MPs tit-bits of information to back up the accusations of 'structural rottenness'. Labour MP Peter Hain suggests that 23 Tory MPs face possible bankruptcy, hence exclusion from the Commons, leading to the end of the Conservative Party majority. Willing dupes or serviceable villains, the Labour MPs' role is to firm up the government's and the City's conviction that something must be done to rescue Lloyds and hence the unfortunate Names.

Like much of British capital, Lloyd's is antiquated. To compete in the international insurance market Lloyds had to underwrite ever greater concentrations of capital, while seeking to distribute their losses among the modern equivalent of the eighteenth-century squirearchy. Vulgar rich as they may be, they cannot absorb the losses of monopoly capital. Lloyds will now be guided by the Bank of England to open its doors to the giant insurance companies and industrial combines. The terrible misfortune that has befallen just some Names will no doubt be relieved by a general spreading of loss among the more comfortable, who will in turn seek their consolation in higher premiums which will in turn require that greater profits be extracted from those who actually work rather than display flair. ■



## MISCARRIAGES OF JUSTICE

# Justice for Winston Silcott

The Winston Silcott Defence Campaign is calling for a picket of the court hearing of Detective Chief Superintendent Graham Melvin on Thursday and Friday, 18 and 19 June. Readers of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* are urged to attend. Assemble at 10am outside Bow Street Magistrate's Court.

SUSAN DAVIDSON

DC Melvin led the police investigation after the uprising on Broadwater Farm Estate in 1985, following the death of Mrs Cynthia Jarrett on Broadwater Farm Estate. During the uprising PC Blakelock was killed.

Melvin's police team put the estate and parts of the Tottenham area in North London under a state of siege in the months of their inquiries. Over a quarter of all the homes on the estate were raided and 369 people, nearly all black and many of them juveniles, were arrested. No forensic evidence was recovered and none of the 1,000-plus police photos taken that night identified anyone involved in the killing of PC Blakelock. Detention and questioning by the police was intense, repressive and terrified many families.

Suspects were denied access to solicitors and kept in appalling conditions for days. In the event, all but five of the 74 convictions that followed the uprising relied completely on uncorroborated confessions made in custody. All three men sentenced for the death of Blakelock - Mark Braithwaite, Engin Raghip and Winston Silcott - were convicted on false evidence.

But DC Melvin's days of glory are over. He has already faced an internal police inquiry for his treatment of Jason Hill whose detention and questioning under cruel conditions at the age of thirteen was condemned by the trial judge.

Now he faces criminal charges of perjury and conspiring to pervert the course of justice with particular reference to falsifying the alleged confession of Winston Silcott.

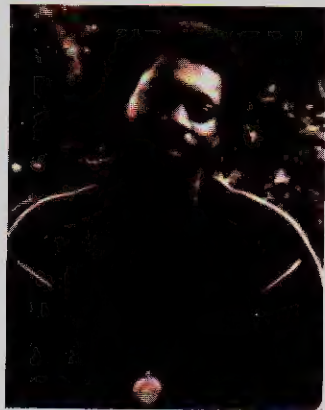
Just as Melvin represents state oppression, so Winston Silcott represents the fightback.

Winston is still in prison serving life for the murder of Anthony Smith in December 1984. This sentence must be seen as a continuation of the police persecution that he has faced all his life. From a young age he attracted special attention from the local Tottenham police and was regularly stopped, searched and detained. Not only did he speak up in his own defence but he would regularly protest against the criminalisation of others. In a recent interview he says:

'They pick on anyone as being a threat if you stand up to them. They used to swarm over Broadwater Farm and do what they wanted. If I saw a youth get

arrested I would ask him for his name and address and get a solicitor for him to inform his parents. The police tried to intimidate me, but I would stand my ground and take notes and inform the family.'

The police naturally targeted Winston who was once picked up three days in a row. When he came to court for the killing of Anthony Smith, Winston was already detained for the death of PC Blakelock. The Smith trial was a prejudiced and ill-advised business. It was attended by senior police involved in the Blakelock inquiry and the jury were given special protection and advised by the trial judge to ignore anything they may have seen or heard about Winston in the media. This was the time in which the newspapers, both popular and up-market, were baying for revenge for the death of PC Blakelock with open racism. Winston's legal adviser wrongly persuaded him not to put forward a self-defence plea.



Winston Silcott

An appeal for retrial with new evidence of Smith's threats against Winston and with eye-witness statements is being submitted to the Court of Appeal at this time. It must succeed. Winston is still fighting for his freedom. He is important to all who support the fightback against injustice and racism.

■ Write letters of support to: Winston Silcott B74053, HMP Gartree Market Harborough, Leicester LE16 7RP.

■ Winston's birthday is June 16.

■ Support the **Winston Silcott Defence Campaign** which meets on alternate Tuesday evenings at: 247a West Green Road London N15. Tel: 081 809 6483.

The next edition of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* will carry a review of *A Climate of Fear: The Murder of PC Blakelock and the Case of the Tottenham Three*, by David Rose, published by Bloomsbury, £6.99.

## South Africa

# Negotiations offer no prospects for democracy

During the weeks leading up to the second meeting of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) on 15 May, the de Klerk regime was again shaken by new revelations of the complicity of the South African security forces in violence and assassinations, and news of a huge corruption scandal involving cabinet ministers.

CAT WIENER

This information could have provided powerful ammunition for the ANC. Hard evidence that the murder of four anti-apartheid activists in the Eastern Cape in 1985 was carried out with the blessing of the State Security Council; judicial inquiry findings pointing irrefutably at security force involvement in training Inkatha vigilantes and carrying out horrific train massacres; revelations that while former Minister for Constitutional Affairs Gerrit Viljoen headed the Department of Development Aid he and his government mafia lined their own pockets with billions of rands meant for the poorest and most devastated black townships.

Such issues could provide a focus for galvanising mass resistance to a murderous and fraudulent regime and taking forward the struggle for majority rule. Yet instead the leadership of the ANC has reduced even the worst atrocities to mere bargaining chips in an attempt to wring concessions from the government - an attempt which has so far failed.

It was the ANC which moved from its original demand that the required majority to pass decisions in a constituent assembly should be two-thirds (which it could reasonably expect to achieve in elections) as opposed to the government's 75 per cent, which would give the National Party and its allies an effective minority veto. It later offered to accept the Democratic Party's proposed 70 per cent on all issues except passing a bill of rights, requiring 75 per cent. The government countered this by agreeing 70 per cent for everything except matters pertaining to the composition of regional and local government which would have to remain at 75 per cent. The government is also proposing a regionally-elected upper house with powers equal to those of the legislative assembly. There is not even any pretence that it would be democratically elected. The resulting impasse was inevitable: if elections are held on the basis proposed by the National Party then they will serve no other end than the naked entrenchment of minority rule.

Some ANC leaders and the SACP denounced the government, and warned of imminent crisis in the negotiating process. However, Mandela played down fears that the talks would now collapse, saying: 'We should have the will to break the deadlock... all our efforts are directed to that'; on 16 May, it was announced that discussions between the ANC and the government would continue - in secret.

In fact, the ANC has only once called off talks. In May 1991, as the violence escalated to new heights and in the face of incon-



trovertible evidence of government collusion in the killing, the ANC issued an ultimatum demanding that the government act, and sack two centrally-implicated ministers, Vlok and Malan. The government had by then failed to meet its deadline for the release of political prisoners, and many of these had embarked on a hungerstrike. When the government did not respond, intense pressure from within its own ranks ensured that the ANC had little choice but to call off the talks. That same pressure forced the ANC to enter into the Patriotic Front during the same period: but secret talks with the government continued throughout, and by December, the ANC was prepared to jettison the Patriotic Front and its united demand for an elected Consti-

tuent Assembly in favour of unilaterally entering CODESA. Today, the ANC leadership has staked its credibility on CODESA and the promise of some form of interim government by June. With the heady scent of a share in power already in the air, it would take unprecedented pressure from the movement on the ground to force the ANC to break off talks now. Without such pressure, it is likely that some accommodation will be reached which, while falling short of majority rule, nevertheless takes a less blatantly undemocratic form.

For while the ANC and the government haggle over percentage points, broad agreement is being reached on a range of issues which lay the foundations for a 'transitional authority'.

The brief of the working parties set up by CODESA One was to reach consensus on transitional arrangements, a constitution-making body or process, the creation of a climate for free political activity, constitutional principles, the future of the 'bantustans' and the timescales for implementing decisions. On 13 May, four out of five published their recommendations.

The proposal to reincorporate Transkei, Ciskei, Venda and Bophutatswana should be welcomed with caution. This move is part of de Klerk's strategy to form a so-called moderate alliance with homeland leaders, many of whom are long-standing puppets of apartheid.

Other agreements are more disturbing: cabinet powers for multi-party councils, made up of all groups participating in CODESA, which are to oversee regional and local government finance and multi-racial elections. They will take decisions on the basis of an 80 per cent majority. This semblance of democracy masks the fact that the government will remain in power as the real transitional authority, 'monitored' by the councils to ensure a 'climate for free and fair elections'.

The ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, is to be incorporated into the South African Defence Force - the very force responsible for fomenting violence in order to undermine the ANC. And detention without trial will be preserved 'because special measures are necessary to deal with the threat to public order during the transitional period.'

These measures can only mean additional repression and terror for the black working class, the armed cadre of APLA and AZANLA and their organisations PAC and AZAPO, and all those who reject apartheid's rotten crumbs and continue the struggle for liberation. While the ANC and the National Party engage in a power-tussle which has no relevance to the needs of the majority, this struggle can only intensify.

## Confrontation in Coventry estates

For three nights from Tuesday 12 May the youth of Coventry's Wood End estate engaged the police in running street battles. This is not the first nor the last of these skirmishes on working class estates which could easily explode into larger riots or risings.

With high unemployment, virtually no social facilities, and with very little hope, the communities on these estates are targeted for harassment by the police and state officials. These estates have been designated as criminal ghettos. One local man in Coventry said it all: 'We have no respect for the police because they treat us like scum.' Another stated: 'the police are out of order. They come on here harassing people and dragging them off to gaol for no reason.

There'll be more aggro if they don't pull out of our turf.'

The growing division between poor and rich in Britain is manifest as a daily reality on these estates. The existence of youth gangs, whose disillusion is often vented on their own community, is entirely the responsibility of greed-ridden capitalism which offers working class youth no future. The tragedy is that there is as yet no political organisation organising a fightback against the rotten conditions forced on working class communities. In this the real treachery of the Labour Party is apparent. There has been no opposition to ignorant and arrogant government ministers who blame juvenile crime on 'wickedness'. In Coventry, just as in Los Angeles, the writing is on the wall.

### City of London Anti-Apartheid Group

#### PUBLIC MEETING

## Talking peace - waging war

Speakers include  
Pan Africanist Congress  
of Azania

Video

7.30pm

Wednesday 3 June  
Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq

nearest tube Holborn

For details of City AA's  
Month of Action against  
state-sponsored violence  
in South Africa  
and other events  
and meetings,  
tel: 071 837 6050



# A flight from reality

Reviewing the general election in the *New Statesman* recently, Jeremy Seabrook wrote that 'the small frightened freedoms that we enjoy are underpinned by a global system that requires that they be paid for by rigorous and intensifying dispossession of the poor of the earth', and argued that 'Labour's promises of a better life depended absolutely and solely on the further success of the global economy further to enrich the people of Britain by means of the same flow of wealth from the poor to the rich of the world.' ROBERT CLOUGH examines the issues.

## A divided world - a divided working class

Seabrook has seized on something of vital importance to communists, even if he deals with it as a non-Marxist. He has recognised the imperialist structure of world capitalism in general, and of British capitalism in particular, and exposed its essentially parasitic character. But more: he links the ideological bankruptcy of Labour to its acceptance of the imperialist order, and thereby makes a direct connection between the parasitism of British imperialism and the corruption of its political life. By corruption, we mean indifference to destitution and oppression, to the destruction of the planet and the lives of the vast majority who live on it. That indifference is the prerogative of those who have benefited from the parasitism - not just the ruling class, but wide sections of the middle class, and an upper stratum of the working class as well.

The general election campaign epitomised such corruption as it became no more than a dispute on how the proceeds of British parasitism would be divided amongst the more affluent sections of the British population. It excluded not just the mass of the working class throughout the world, but the majority of the working class in Britain as well. Politics became a televised circus, a succession of sound bites and photo opportunities. There was no pretence at actively involving the electorate, let alone the working class: that basic feature of elections in the past, public political hustings, has long since disappeared.

The corrupting influence of British imperialism on left wing politics is not restricted to Labour alone: the decadence extends to its apologists and defenders both inside and outside the Party. The SWP, for instance, has a long history of denying the connection between parasitism and corruption. Back in 1979, it argued that:

'In fact neither the export of capital nor the "superprofits" of imperialism play the role they once did... It is arguable that there has been no net capital export at all [to the Third World] for long periods in the recent past... Export of capital plays a vital role in modern capitalism, but it is overwhelmingly export from one developed country to another. Its economic significance is entirely different... It cannot account for the "corruption" of "labour aristocracies"... by the crumbs of superprofits.' (*Socialist Worker* 28 April 1979)

This was written several years after the explosion of bank lending to the Third World had started, and a mere two years before the resulting debt crisis. They repeated the view recently:

'If the Third World's debt service during the 1980s had "benefitted white workers", it would have provided £1,318 for every man, woman and child in the West. They received not a penny - instead it went to help bank profits and the revenues of governments

In fact sections did receive rather more than a penny. The boom in house prices in the 1980s cannot be explained in terms of some fundamental change in the domestic economy. The superprofits of the banks were used as a base for the rapid expansion of credit in the



Everything is coming up roses in Labour's English country garden...

domestic economy. Sections of the working class who had bought their houses in the early-to-mid-1980s - and these were often council houses - found that they were for a period of time 'earning' more through the increase in the value of their houses than through their real wages. This reality is one which the SWP chooses to ignore - but it rips their 'theories' on imperialism and the labour aristocracy to shreds.

## Why Labour lost the election

These strata, having defected to the Tories in 1979, then supported them throughout the 1980s for very material reasons, one of which we have just explained; the aim of Labour's campaign was to win them back. Hence it had become a 'fair tax party', supporting only prudent public expenditure - a coded rejection of any significant steps to alleviate the poverty that is one of the legacies of Thatcherism. Apart from the minor concessions on pensions and child benefit, it offered the working class nothing except when 'resources allow'.

For some on the left, even these concessions to the better-off were inadequate. Militant thought that 'starting tax rises at £21,000 a year could give the Tories ammunition. The tax issue could still make the difference with better-paid skilled and white-collar workers - vital votes Labour has to win back.' (*Militant* 20 March 1992) whilst according to its post-mortem, 'white-collar workers, middle ranking teachers and middle class voters who could be won to Labour' were not, because they 'got the impression Labour would tax them harder', and referred editorially to the 'tax disaster'.

The 'tax disaster' was a very mild, not to mention equitable, proposal that those earning £21,000 and more should pay the same marginal National Insurance rate as those earning less. It only goes to show how many principles need to be ditched to re-elect Labour. But Militant knew that the votes of these better-off strata, particularly in London and the South East, would be crucial to Labour: a perceptiveness not shared by others such as the SWP, who believed that Labour could offer some defence of the working class. Hence its view that 'Labour's defeat was a disaster', a 'disaster for everyone who wants a better society', a 'disaster for working people'

(*Socialist Worker* 18 April 1992). And why did Labour lose? Because it looked little different from the Tories, and because it 'turned its back on working class struggles', facts well known before the election which did not stop the SWP from urging a Labour vote. Neither can be given as an explanation: a more radical standpoint would have been unacceptable to those whose support it needed to win.

A third reason is apparently working class 'confidence': 'The big Labour victories of 1945 and 1966 were won when the unions were strong, when nobody was out of work and when the workers were full of confidence and hope.' (Paul Foot, *Socialist Worker*, May 1992) But the size of the 1945 victory in fact depended on the two million middle class voters who supported Labour for the first time, and who ensured that the largest swings to Labour were in the more affluent constituencies of London and the South East. And Foot forgets (or possibly never knew) that many more workers voted Labour in 1951 when it lost the election than in 1945; the difference was that the middle class had returned to the Tories in sufficient numbers to let them in again.

A similar process took place in 1966: the scale of Labour's victory was determined in large part by the votes of the more affluent, whether they were skilled workers or middle class. Ken Livingstone recognises this when he writes that 'the bases of Labour's greatest successes - led by Attlee in 1945 and Wilson in 1966 - came when we established a coalition between the highly-paid and skilled, and the low-paid and unskilled sections of the working class electorate.' (*Morning Star* 28 April 1992) What he misses out were the very particular conditions in which such a coalition could come about: in 1945, a general spread of democratic sentiment amongst the middle class from their experience in the war against fascism; in 1966, the belief that Labour could rejuvenate British industry where the Tories had patently failed.

Crucial was the position of British imperialism within the world economy. In the late 1940s, it was able to plunder the Empire to ensure that Britain's manufacturing base was rebuilt whilst maintaining working class living standards; in the mid-1960s it was still a significant manufacturing force yet to be overtaken by its major contin-

ental rivals. In the late 1970s and 1980s, severe industrial decline was accompanied by an enormous growth of British imperialism's most parasitic features, principally the financial services sector, with its ability to suck wealth out of the Third World through sheer usury. But Britain's financial supremacy has now been undermined by German and Japanese competition. It cannot afford to maintain the conditions of any more than the most privileged layers of the working class: the rest are to be condemned to increasing poverty. The conditions for Livingstone's coalition no longer exist; the discussion on 'targetting' benefits, as means testing is euphemistically described, merely reflects this new reality.

## Illusions and fairy tales: the SWP and Labour

The SWP, however, prefers fairy tales: 'the Labour Party was founded on the rejection of the Lib-Lab alliances, and on the support for working class political representation' (Open Letter to the Left, *Socialist Worker* 25 April 1992); '[Labour] grew out of the effort to elect working class MPs who were independent of the Liberals and Tories.' (2 May 1992). What is the truth? Until 1918, Labour MPs could only be elected through secret 'Lib-Lab alliances' whilst the first two Labour governments depended on Liberal support. Labour was not founded on the need for 'independent working class representation', but on the need of a narrow section of the trade unions for parliamentary representation at a time when they excluded 90 per cent of the working class. These facts are no secret, but the SWP has to forget them to sustain its position, which is that the skilled workers are the true working class.

This explains its concern to scotch 'the myth that it was the C2s, the better-paid skilled workers, especially in the South East, who cost Labour the election.' Unfortunately it fails. Labour got 43 per cent of the C2 vote, which is far better than the 36 per cent it got in 1987. But in 1974 it got 49 per cent, and then only just scraped home. In both 1979 and 1983, the largest swings against Labour - over 10 per cent on each occasion - were amongst the C2 voters. The Tories gave the better-off sections of the working class a material stake in the system, through council house sales, privatisation and tax concessions, and this bribery was sufficient to retain enough C2 votes for them to win a fourth term. In case there is any doubt about the effect that council house sales for instance have on working class voting patterns, no less than 59 per cent of 1979 Labour voters who bought their houses between then and the 1983 election switched their vote from Labour in 1983. Not a palatable fact for the SWP.

To attempt to bolster their absurd position, they argue that the C2 layer is made up of the self-employed and foremen as well as 'genuine' skilled workers, and that these 'genuine' skilled workers always vote Labour. But the distinction the SWP draws between skilled workers as employees and skilled workers as the self-employed (the collapse of manufacturing employment has made the foreman category far less significant) serves only to hide how this layer as a whole has benefitted from the Tories' 'people's capitalism'. The number of self-employed rose by nearly 1.5 million during the Tory years, a fact that only emphasised how going self-employed has always been one of the ways up for the skilled worker.

The SWP shares with Militant the belief that Labour is a 'workers' party', but differs in proclaiming its organisational independence. Yet this 'independence' is a charade. When Livingstone and Bernie Grant announced they would stand in the leadership contest, the SWP called them 'a real choice', declaring that only they 'represent anything different', and that 'if Livingstone and Grant do succeed in winning the nomination of 55 Labour MPs, their campaign could become a focus for those activists who want to prevent the further drift to the right and to build resistance to the Tories' attacks.' (*Socialist Worker* 25 April 1992) A week later, and this 'real choice' had disappeared in a puff of smoke, having obtained a dozen votes, leaving the SWP without explanation.

The SWP wants to build a 'socialist alternative' to Labour, but only an 'alternative', not an opposition. An 'alternative' cannot be any more than a ginger group of the disaffected or disillusioned who want to be organisationally separate from Labour without breaking their political connection. It is a halfway house where they need be responsible for nothing, be it for Labour or the mass of the working class, the choice of political cowards who could bemoan Labour's defeat as a disaster, but were either too idle or embarrassed to actively canvass for it.

We heard a lot of this 'alternative' after the 1979 election; it was as craven then as now. It supported Benn during his deputy leadership campaign, despite his silence on the hunger strike, and his condemnation of the uprisings of the same year. Indeed, its 'warmth and solidarity' for Benn (Paul Foot's words at the time) contrasted sharply with its dismissal of black working class youth as a 'lumpen proletariat', a 'vulnerable underbelly of the working class'. In 1983, it attacked Livingstone when he described electricians and engineers as privileged, dismissing the 'trend' that sought to create a new popular base 'by linking up with groups which are not part of the working class. The examples most often given are those of such "minorities" as women, blacks and gays'. At the 1988 Socialist Conference, Chris Harman for the 'socialist alternative' could take this a step further to reject a community-based anti-Poll Tax campaign because 'on council estates are drug peddlars, junkies and people claiming houses under false names', and argue that the central issue was the Benn-Heffer leadership campaign.

The 'alternative' was then and now the original, even if spiced with some revolutionary rhetoric. The vehicle for the politics of the SWP is the same privileged stratum of the working class that Labour represents; the SWP can no more break with Labour than it can from the stratum in which it is rooted. We have explained in the past how the SWP, along with the rest of the left, reject both the concept of imperialism and the existence of the split in the working class. The election and its aftermath shows the consequences: a flight from reality. ■



... whilst most of the world lives in squalor



## GEORGE JACKSON 1941-1971

George Jackson was an Afro-American working class communist. Born in a Chicago ghetto in 1941 he was murdered by warders in San Quentin Prison in 1971. At 18 he was sentenced from one year to life for the theft of \$70. He spent the rest of his life in prison. There 'I met Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Engels, and Mao ... and they redeemed me'. In prison he also joined the Black Panther Party. One year before his death, the police murdered his 17-year-old brother Jonathan who, single handed and armed, invaded the San Rafael Courthouse to free three black comrades. **EDDIE ABRAHAMS** and **CAT WIENER** chart George Jackson's contribution as a revolutionary.

Harassed and brutalised in prison Jackson witnessed the black risings of the 1960s, the police massacre of the Black Panther leadership, the US bombing of Vietnam, the silence of the US labour movement and the resistance of the oppressed across the world. Out of this experience and his study of Marxism he produced *Soledad Brother* (SB) and *Blood in My Eye* (BIME). These works, fired by a passionate and poetic imagination, constitute a treasury of revolutionary thought. They chart his development on major issues of revolution. For example, on the question of women he moved from seeing women as inferior and as obstacles to struggle, to recognising their role as 'the very same as the man's ... The differences we see in bourgeois society are all conditioned and artificial.'

George Jackson lived and died for the liberation of humanity from imperialism, capitalism and racism:

**Black, brown and white are victims together. At the end of this massive collective struggle, we will uncover our new man ... He will be better equipped to wage the real struggle, the permanent struggle after the revolution - the one for new relationships between men.**

BIME p105

The outstanding legacy of this communist fighter has been forgotten, buried by those who dread his uncompromising commitment to socialist revolution as a necessary condition for liberation from exploitation and racism. He understood with greater clarity than most the relentless savagery of imperialism and the absolute necessity of revolutionary force and violence to destroy it. His communist approach to the question of racism and his recognition of the vanguard role of the black working class places him head and shoulders above those leaders who espouse nationalist, separatist or pro-capitalist programmes. In the wake of the April/May risings in Los Angeles, it is therefore appropriate to restate his message.

### Capitalism, black oppression and the black working class

The starting point of all George Jackson's thought is that the capitalist system is at the root of racism, poverty, unemployment and oppression. The particular oppression of the black working class is traced to the US Civil War when the form of black slavery changed:

**from chattel to economic slavery, and we were thrown on to the labour market to compete at a disadvantage with poor whites.**

SB p206

This was marked by 'massive unemployment and underemployment'. It created 'black colonies inside the Amerikan fascist state' which became 'secondary markets and sources of cheap raw materials ... our bodies'.

**'The monster they've engendered in me will return to torment its maker, from the grave, the pit, the profoundest pit. Hurl me into the next existence, the descent into hell won't turn me. I'll crawl back to dog his trail forever. They won't defeat my revenge, never, never. I'm part of a righteous people who anger slowly, but rage undammed. We'll gather at his door in such a number that the rumbling of our feet will make the earth tremble'**

## Legacy of a Black Communist

The impoverishment and oppression of the black working class derives directly from capitalist production:

**It was the profit motive that built the tenement and the city project. Profit and loss prevents repairs and maintenance. Free enterprise brought the monopolistic chain store to the neighbourhood. The concept of private ownership of facilities that people need to exist brought the legions of hip-shooting, brainless pigs down upon our heads, our homes, our streets. They're there to protect the entrepreneurs, his chain store and his property that you are renting, his bank!** SB p207

Racism and oppression 'is a fundamental characteristic' of capitalism. Capitalism cannot 'meet the people's needs.'

**Monopoly capital is the enemy. It crushes the life force of all the people. It must be completely destroyed, as quickly as possible, utterly, totally ruthlessly, relentlessly destroyed.** BIME p102

### Imperialism and the US working class

However, in order to destroy this 'monster', the US working class cannot rely on the traditional US labour movement. Jackson understood that the US ruling class has been able to 'co-opt' and 'neutralise' large sections of the white working class. Imperialism has made 'concessions':

**to the degenerate sections of the working class, with the aim of creating a buffer zone between the ruling class and the still potentially revolutionary segments of the lower classes.** BIME p111

The basis for such concessions is the US's racist plunder of oppressed people at home and abroad. US imperialism rests 'on the misery and discomfort of the world' and its wealth, prosperity and 'progressive reforms' are made 'at the expense of the rest of us and the world's peoples'. As a result the 'huge mass of blue collar workers ... support a system owned and controlled by a tiny minority'. They are exploited, but they identify with:

**the white hierarchy [because of] ... their economic advantage over the oppressed races. They may be oppressed themselves, but in return they are allowed to oppress millions of others.** BIME p163

Thus imperialism has been able to 'merge the economic political and labour elites' into 'the greatest reactionary community of self-interest that has ever existed. This is



Jackson's view was a fascist system and provided the foundation for US imperialism's world plunder.

Many a 'Marxist' unable to differentiate between essence and appearance has dismissed Jackson's views because he describes the alliance between the ruling class and labour aristocracy as fascist. Whilst the term may not be orthodox, the essence of his analysis cannot be disputed. It has repeatedly been confirmed by the US labour movement's pro-imperialist and racist stand. In addition, serious socialists would note that while bourgeois democracy, not fascism, existed for the mass of the white working class, for the oppressed internationally the bourgeois order is maintained with guns, prisons, murder and war, not democracy.

### The role of the black working class

George Jackson's grasp of the counter-revolutionary role of the official US labour movement marked him off from the 'old left'. US communists, he argued, needed to develop a new strategy which acknowledged the fact that the 'segments of the lower classes' - primarily the black working class - constituted the revolutionary vanguard of the whole working class, not the official labour movement:

**The principal reservoir of revolutionary potential in Amerika lies in wait inside the Black Colony. Its sheer numerical strength, its desperate historical relation to the violence of the productive system, and the fact of its present status in the creation of wealth force the black stratum at the base of the whole class structure into the forefront of any revolutionary scheme.** BIME p23

Despite his detractors, he did not dismiss the whole working class or argue that the black working class could make the revolution alone. He merely insisted on its leading role:

**The impact of black revolutionary**

**rage could carry at least the opening stages of a socialist revolution - under certain circumstances - not discounting some of the complexities created by the spectre of racism.** BIME p25

Indeed he argued for the unity of black and white workers on a principled anti-racist, anti-imperialist basis. In his fight for socialism and working class unity he opposed black separatism and nationalism. Commenting on Malcolm X's move away from nationalism he notes:

**You remember what was on his lips when he died. Vietnam and economics, political economy. The professional killers could have murdered him long before they did. They let Malcolm rage on Muslim nationalism for a number of years because they knew it was an empty ideal, but the second he got his feet on the ground, they murdered him.** SB p271

He had contempt for black separatists who 'attack the white left ... who want to help us destroy fascism'. They used 'the tactic of (attacking) "white left-wing causes" to protect the bosses' "white right-wing causes"'. They are 'as much part of the repression, even more than the real-life rat-informer-pig'.

### Imperialism and internationalism

For George Jackson, the struggle for socialism was an international struggle. Among the oppressed worldwide:

**The common bond will be the desire to humble the oppressor, the need to destroy capitalist man and his terrible, ugly machine.** SB p232

This internationalism has a material basis. Reminiscent of Marx, Jackson notes:

**It isn't just a matter of trusting the goodwill of other slaves and other colonies and other peoples. It is simply a matter of common need. We need allies; we have a powerful enemy who cannot be defeated without an allied effort.** SB p233

Within the international revolutionary movement, the communist vanguard in the US had very special duties:

**The entire colonial world is watching the blacks in the USA ... Their problems and struggles with the Amerikan monster are much more difficult than they would be if we actively aided them. We are on the inside. We are the only ones [besides the very small white minority left] who can get at the monster's heart without subjecting the world to a nuclear fire. Black**

### The question of force, violence and the armed struggle

Unifying all his thought was George Jackson's unbending and categorical insistence on the necessity of deploying revolutionary force and violence in opposition to the terror of imperialism. He warned that:

**If today's young revolutionary vanguard ... seriously intends to step out front and take the monster to task they should understand from the outset that the monster is merciless.**

Indeed within the US:

**At the instant a black head rises out of our crisis existence, it is lopped off and hung from the highest courthouse or newspaper firm.**

SB p218

He concluded therefore that 'class struggle means the suppression of the opposing class' and the destruction of 'the enemy capitalist state'. And:

**If terror is going to be a choice of weapons, there must be funerals on both sides.** BIME p28

Many criticised George Jackson's insistence on the necessity of revolutionary force and violence. These fools do not account for the reality of imperialism and have grotesque illusions in its democratic proclamations. Jackson rightly had none. In the 20 years since his death, the history of imperialism has been one of the most bloody and brutal slaughter - Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Palestine, Ireland, Grenada, Panama, the Gulf, Afghanistan and elsewhere - in defence of capital and profits.

Criticising the pacifism of Martin Luther King (while respecting his sincerity - he was 'too innocent, too cultured, too civil for these times') Jackson noted that:

**Any claims that non-violent, purely non-violent political agitation has served to force back the legions of capitalist expansion are false.** SB p195

and that:

**There is no case of successful liberation without violence. How could you neutralise an army without violence?** SB p196

Applying these principles to the movement of his day, Jackson advocated the systematic organisation of armed struggle in tandem with the political struggle in the USA. Gunned down in prison he was never able to test and develop his theories in the context of the real class struggle.

He was however no militarist, no glorifier of the armed struggle for its own sake. The armed struggle was a defensive tactic forced on the oppressed. Furthermore the necessary form of revolutionary force is changeable and dependent on circumstances and:

**circumstances change in time and space, that there can be nothing dogmatic about revolutionary theory. It is to be born out of each popular struggle. Each popular struggle must be analysed to discover new ideas.** BIME p27

In today's 'new world order' of intensified imperialist militarism, violence and racism George Jackson's legacy is more relevant and persuasive than ever. A new communist movement will itself decide what form revolutionary force must take. But in doing so it will utilise the essence of his message: 'the working class fails to meet force with force, bourgeois domination with immediate domination. It has no future.'



**'What White Americans have never fully understood – but what the Negro can never forget – is that White society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, White institutions maintain it, and White society condones it.'**

# Fire next time...

'On the evening of August 11, as Los Angeles sweltered in a heat wave, a highway patrolman halted a young Negro driver for speeding. The young man appeared intoxicated and the patrolman arrested him. As a crowd gathered, law enforcement officers were called to the scene. A highway patrolman mistakenly struck a bystander with his billy club. A young Negro woman, who was erroneously accused of spitting on the police, was dragged into the middle of the street. When the police departed, members of the crowd began hurling rocks at passing cars, beating white motorists and overturning cars and setting them on fire. The police reacted hesitantly. Actions they did take further inflamed people on the streets.'

The year? Not 1992, but 1965. In the few days that followed the outbreak of rioting in Watts, a Los Angeles black ghetto, 4,000 people were arrested, 34 killed and hundreds injured. Damage was estimated at \$35 million. At that time the Watts riot was regarded as the worst since the Detroit riot in 1943. It shocked the nation.

But Watts was not an isolated event. Violent disorder – more often than not exercised against black people – had been a feature of the 1960s in response to black people's self-organisation against racism and discrimination. In 1963-64 police used dogs, firehoses and cattle prods against civil rights marchers in the South. White racists bombed black people's houses and churches, shooting black people who opposed white supremacy. White police were involved in lynch murders of civil rights workers in Philadelphia. KKK shot black people indiscriminately. None of this shocked White America.



National Guard in Detroit, 1967

When black people fought back with bricks and bottles, police responded with gunfire. Violence escalated and black people continued to organise and fight back. 43 riots and disorders were reported in 1966 and 1967 saw outbreaks of rioting, principally in the black ghettos of major cities, across the United States. That frightened White America. Usually sparked off by a minor incident with the police, the riots became an expression of black anger against racism and repression.



Detroit uprising, 1967

It was a result of these riots that President Johnson appointed a Commission on Civil Disorders – the Kerner Commission – with the brief that it should discover what happened, why, and how it could be prevented in the future. The Report it produced was an indictment of US White society, revealing discrimination, disadvantage and racism. It recommended a programme of affirmative action in the ghettos to redress poverty and 'make good the promises of American democracy to all citizens'.

The Commission reported that by and large, the rioters were black, young, male, lived in the ghettos, were better educated than their peers, but employed in demeaning jobs. They were proud of their race, acutely conscious of discrimination, hated the police and were hostile to middle class blacks who had sold out. 'They were and they are a time-bomb ticking in the heart of the richest nation in the history of the world.'

The Report concluded that 'our nation is moving towards two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal'. But the Commission was warned by one witness:

'I read that report... of the 1919 riot in Chicago and it is as if I were reading the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot in 1935, the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of 1943, the report of the McCone Commission on the Watts riot. I must again in candor say to you members of this Commission – it is a kind of Alice in Wonderland – with the same moving picture re-shown over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction.'

Since 1968 White America has held its breath that the riots would not recur. The affirmative action programmes did not materialise on anything like the scale recommended. Twenty-five years later, the ghettos in US cities are more violent, the poor are poorer, the sick are dying faster. In 1992 middle class America is focusing on AIDS, drugs, crime, gangs, the 'underclass' and the breakdown of 'the black family' as the causes of the violence and the riots. But in

essence the issue is the same as the Kerner Commission reported: 'What White Americans have never fully understood – but what the Negro can never forget – is that White society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, White institutions maintain it, and White society condones it.'

But like all riot investigations before and since, both in the USA and in Britain, the Kerner Report concentrates on the violence of the oppressed, not the daily violence meted out by a racist society to which the riots are an angry response.

There is a subtext to the report, just as there was a subtext to the Scarman report on the 1981 inner-city riots in Britain. When President Johnson commissioned the inquiry into the 1967 riots he was sure that a conspiracy of radical black militants was to blame. By 1967, black political organisation had surpassed civil rights constitutionalism. Johnson's real nightmare was that behind urban uprising lay Black Power and black consciousness which could really challenge the racist social order. Despite going to the lengths of running Stokely Carmichael's movements through a computer to try to show a connection with the spread of the riots, the Commission dismissed the conspiracy theory. But it did conclude that militant organisations encouraged violence and 'helped to create an atmosphere that contributed to the outbreak of disorder'. It was enough. While affirmative action was not the priority, ensuring the destruction of black militancy was. In the years that followed a generation of black revolutionaries were hounded, imprisoned and murdered. Middle class elements, prepared to settle for crumbs and sell-out the ghettos, were swiftly incorporated into the corrupt political mainstream.

It seemed to work and it was cheap. It was enough of a model for Britain to follow in the face of its own urban riots in the 1980s. But in the 1990s White US society is about to be visited by the fruits of its political chicanery and barbarism. In such a society Los Angeles can only be the beginning. The time-bomb is still ticking.

Carol Brickley

## LOS ANGELES RIOTS

# The rage

On 29 April, following the acquittal of four police filmed beating a black man, Los Angeles erupted in the fiercest uprising seen in the US since the 1960s. The rising left 58 people – mostly black or Hispanic – dead, 12,000 arrested, 3,700 buildings and 10,000 businesses destroyed. An estimated \$1 billion damage was done. The fighting, which continued for over two days, only stopped when the Bush government deployed 5,000 police, 1,590 sheriffs, 2,300 state police, 1,000 FBI, 6,000 National Guard, 3,000 7th Infantry and 1,500 marines.

The jury's verdict was delivered at 3.15pm and within an hour crowds had gathered and begun to attack property and police. By 8pm it had spread and LA Police Headquarters, the courthouse, City Hall and the LA Times building had been targeted for assault. Determined crowds, including gang members, attempted to spread it to rich areas of Beverly Hills and the Hollywood dream-factory itself, but it was around these and around the police HQ, courthouse and newspaper buildings that the police and military presence was concentrated. \$1 million had been set aside in advance of the trial to prepare this response. Those store owners in South Central LA, asking where were the police when their buildings were burned or looted, need look no further than these rich areas. Damage was concentrated in the poor areas simply because the police and army were used to prevent it spreading to the rich areas.

As news of the verdict spread nationwide, outbursts began to hit Atlanta, San Jose, Las Vegas, New York and, most seriously San Francisco where 1,400 people were arrested when police used tear gas to break up protests.

## An open and shut case

The immediate cause of this massive outburst was the acquittal of the police officers who had been filmed brutally beating Rodney King. They were seen using an electric stun gun on an unresisting King and landing fifty six blows with their batons causing facial fractures, a broken leg and extensive bruising.

This beating was shown extensively on television and even the police radio messages about the event were heard. The police were heard calling black people 'monkeys', 'bumboys' and saying of King 'I haven't beaten anyone that bad in a long time'. These embarrassing revelations brought forth pious exclamations of shock from the LA Police Chief, President Bush and other public figures. Here, after all, was clear and irrefutable evidence of police racist brutality. Surely nothing could stop a conviction? Indeed many black leaders cooled the situation when the film was first shown last year by arguing precisely that. Surely the US justice system, imperfect as it is, would not allow this blatant act to remain unpunished, they said.

And it is precisely at this vulnerable point that the shock of the verdict hit home. The jury and the court saw the reality of life for black people in vivid film, saw the racism of the police, saw the way in which black people are beaten like dogs on the street and said – 'it's OK, that's what we expect our police to do to black people'. As a result many commentators have called the jury 'innocent and naive'. Such commentators had supposed the jury would be sophisticated enough to go along with the game of pretend that would convict the odd policeman who had been caught red-handed in order better to protect a system that is racist to the core.

Alexander Cockburn put his finger on the point:

'The jurors... had two options. They could have accepted the arguments of the prosecution and the apparent evidence of the video footage and convicted the four LA police officers. Amid rousing cantatas as to the "basic fairness of the system", life would have continued on its usual unfair course. Or the jurors could have taken the path they did in fact elect, which was to go to the very heart of the matter and conclude that these officers were only doing what they had been trained to do and that all the famous video footage demonstrated was that they had indeed gone by the book.' (New Statesman, 8 May 1992)

By choosing the second option, the jury (whom 50% of whites polled thought reached an understandable verdict) has exposed what many in the USA, including middle class black leaders, desperately want to keep hidden. For years, indeed since the days of the Civil Rights movement, the argument has been that the US system could be gradually purged of its racism. That the granting of civil rights and steps towards equality of opportunity could create a more fair society. The jury in LA pulled aside this curtain of myth and showed a society which has become more and not less polarised. In which to be black is increasingly to be poor, to be in prison, to be the victim of the police. Conditions have not got better for the majority of black people, they have got worse. And a sizeable number of Hispanics and whites share the poverty and brutalisation. They too are the Have Nots of US society – joining the riots. They too recognised the message of the LA court: 'We are wealthy and have something to protect. We will protect it with a police force which uses any means necessary to keep you out of our areas and out of our minds.'

## The American dream founders...

Myths die hard. Especially when they are myths peddled to keep the poor in their place. Hence President Bush



**'It is no coincidence, either, that it all happened in the American city that most epitomises the burgeoning growth under Presidents Reagan and Bush, of a powerless underclass – a Rich v Poor polarisation in a city where the world's most obscene conspicuous consumption of wealth exists so closely alongside Third World-type ghettos, where Bel Air can seem like exclusive parts of Johannesburg and South Central Los Angeles more like Soweto.'** Andrew Stephen, *Observer*

# undammed



declared himself 'frustrated' at the verdict. Hence too, the ritual calls by black leaders for the police concerned to be prosecuted under civil rights law. They appear to believe that such a step would restore black faith in the judicial system. They miss the point. Most black or other minority groups know, and many reasonably honest whites admit, the beating was not in the least unusual. A Commission investigating the LA police last year, found them to be habitually racist and brutal. It was not, for instance, until there was an outcry following sixteen deaths caused by police choke holds, that this method of subduing people was stopped. Daryl Gates, the Police Chief, said at the time that choke holds killed black people because their neck arteries did not work like those of 'normal people'.

Nor was the acquittal of the police concerned an unusual event. The US courts are consistently biased against black people. The trial of the LA police had been switched to Ventura County, a rich suburban area where many police live and there were no black people on the jury. The 1 in 3 black men who have been through the police/court/prison system have few illusions in its fairness. But there is a difference between thinking that a system works unfairly and thinking that a system is designed to be unfair. The first may be reformed but the second can only be destroyed. The jury's verdict reflected the polarisation of US society that has taken place, the end of its brief brush with liberalism, the drawing of battle lines. And the

response of the oppressed too recognised that changed reality. The middle ground has disappeared.

This is a bitter blow to those who had peddled the gradual improvement myth. The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s was a mighty movement for the enfranchisement of black people. They won their basic civil and democratic rights. But the reality has not been the Promised Land of which Martin Luther King spoke to the parents of the LA rioters.

## ... on the rock of economic reality

The Promised Land, often only a mile away from the ghettos, is mainly white and very luxurious indeed. But the condition of black people is wretched. Although they make up 12% of the US population, they receive only 7.8% of personal incomes. The median household income of black people is 60% that of whites, exactly the same as it was in 1967. 45% of black children live below the official poverty line (reflecting the impoverished state of many mothers) and their infant mortality is double the national average. Hardly surprising that stores were looted for such 'luxuries' as nappies, meat and clothing. Alongside this unrelenting poverty go the bleak statistics of wasted and blighted lives. In Washington last year 42% of black males aged between 18 and 35 were involved in the criminal justice system; 70% had been arrested by the age of 35. Half all US murder victims

are black. There are more black men in prison than there are in higher education. 30% of AIDS cases are among black people. In Los Angeles last year 700 young people were shot dead in gang fights.

After the riots of the 1967, President Johnson appointed a Commission of politicians, industrialists and Police Chiefs to investigate the causes. The Commission found widespread discrimination, poverty and lack of opportunity to escape from these conditions. This very moderate body said:

'Only a commitment to national action on an unprecedented scale can shape a future compatible with the historic ideals of American society... The major need is to generate new will – the will to tax ourselves to the extent necessary to meet the vital needs of the nation'.

Johnson implemented various public programmes in housing and anti-poverty fields. But the main result was not the alleviation of poverty but the enlargement of the black middle class employed to administer such programmes. In 1967 the Commission had already commented that there was a growing black middle class but: 'the development of a small but steadily increasing Negro middle class while the greater part of the Negro population is stagnating economically is creating a growing gap between Negro haves and have-nots'. Today the realisation has certainly sunk in that no country, even the richest imperialist country in the

world, can consist entirely of the middle classes. And under Reagan and Bush even this small ladder of opportunity has diminished. The programmes have disappeared. In the 1990s black men with degrees earn 79% of white salaries, the same as whites with only high school education. Between 1973 and 1990 the average yearly income of black high school graduates fell in real terms by 44%.

In the 1960s when the US, despite its war in Vietnam, was a great deal richer than today, it proved impossible to change the condition of the majority of black people. Those leading the struggle were murdered one by one – Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, the Panther leadership. The black struggle was left without leadership and black areas became even more demoralised. In the 1980s under Reagan, taxes were cut, the rich got richer and the greatest sufferers were the black population. As the USA de-industrialised, the need for unskilled labour fell further and the jobs available were the very rock bottom service jobs and few of those. Unemployment in black areas is now over 50%.

Today, only the lonely voice of JK Galbraith reminds us of the liberal era that has passed. In his latest book *The Culture of Contentment* he calls, just as the Riot Commission of the 1960s did, for increased taxes to provide a programme of public works. He points out, more honestly than most bourgeois ideologists, that what he calls an 'underclass' (in reality this 'underclass' is the most oppressed layer of the working class) performs a necessary economic function in all advanced capitalist economies. Escape from this class is now firmly blocked and 'as membership in the underclass becomes stable and enduring – greater resentment and social unrest should be expected.' The optimism of the 1960s has vanished. He predicts no happy ending because he says, the wealthy will not pay the price of giving real aid. Instead they will guard their rich areas, blame the victims of poverty for their 'criminal disposition' and institute 'increasingly oppressive authority in areas of urban desolation'.

In this Galbraith is merely describing a process well underway already and vividly highlighted in Los Angeles. In his pessimistic tone we can hear the voice of someone who knows the middle ground has vanished. With a federal deficit of \$400 billion, there will be no anti-poverty programme. Not only the means is lacking but also the will.

## The brief life of US liberalism

In the 1980s voices began to be raised complaining that programmes of affirmative action, designed to open up areas of employment hitherto blocked to black people, had gone too far. This despite the fact that such programmes had achieved negligible results. Grotesquely, white voices were raised complaining that they were now discriminated against. At the same time black ideologists, in line with the facile 'Whooley you can make it if you think positive' of US TV game shows, began to argue vociferously that black people were the authors of their own misfortune. Shelby Steele blamed the decline of the black family and a black female author blamed long-suffering black women for 'emasculating' their men folk. It did not take a genius to notice that the stage was being set for blaming the victim in order to justify clubbing him. Everybody shifted to the right one pace. Ex-Klansmen ran for public office. White liberals began to whisper about their deep fears of black crime. Democrats began to compete with the Republicans in their espousal of the death penalty.

And Los Angeles has brought them all out of the woodwork both in the

US and Britain. Charles Murray in the *Sunday Times*, argued that:

'... The white reactions to the riots will be profoundly different from the reaction in the 1960s, because a consensus of whites no longer accepts that whites are to blame for black problems'.

Peregrine Worsthorne in the *Sunday Telegraph* said:

'Alone among ethnic groups inner-city blacks do not have what it takes to prosper in the land of the free... the whites persist in talking about the plight of the black as if it were a material problem rather than a moral problem...'

and goes on to call for a sinister and vague 'exercise in coercive social engineering'.

*The Economist* argued:

'By every available measure of self-discipline, whether education, sexual morals, willingness to work or vandalism, the black ghettos of LA are in an appalling state'.

Time and again the commentators refer to the 'pathology' of the black family; welfare dependence; lack of self-discipline and loose morals as the cause of black poverty. Such arguments are the timeless responses of the rich when they care to study the lives of the poor and will be found in the self-righteous spoutings of British Victorians studying slum life. The poor are always poor because they deserve to be. In the US today the commentators have merely added a vicious dose of racism.

The US ruling class, built from slavery and from looting the world, dares to talk of morals! It has created a culture in which nothing at all counts other than money and power and the pleasures these can purchase. Irony that LA, home to the Hollywood purveyors of pornography and violence, should suddenly get a fit of the morals where black people and poor people are concerned.

The facts are rarely heard. The white nuclear family has been decaying at the same rate as the black family over the post war period. Nor is it clear, in the arguments of the racists, how the presence of an unemployed father would ease the transition from poverty to riches. The much cited cost of welfare payments is negligible compared to the benefits paid to the well-off. \$50 billion, 56% of housing subsidies goes to the richest 20% of the population in the form of mortgage relief. The poorest 20% get \$15 billion. Social security pensions and Medicare are entirely government funded and almost exclusively benefit the middle classes whereas welfare payments and Medicaid are largely locally funded. It is the rich in the USA who get the real handouts.

The poor should certainly be arguing for an end to the culture of dependency – the dependence of the rich on robbing the poor! The dependence of the wealthy on tax handouts and subsidies! The dependence of employers on low-paid workers without rights! The dependence of the wealthy in Beverly Hills on Hispanic maids and gardeners to keep their clothes clean and their beds made!

And in their actions in Los Angeles, in their rage against their own condition, the poor were taking the first steps towards a conscious rejection of the fate to which the rich have consigned them. They will remember their dead and imprisoned and recognise that the power they expressed during the uprising terrified the rich. There will be no reforms this time, to hide the reality of racism and poverty and offer escape to isolated individuals. This time, hopefully, people will learn that their fate lies in the collective action they take to fight a system which is unreformable. In the divided condition of US society there are millions waiting for this call.

Maxine Williams



## ATTICA PRISON REVOLT 1971

# Sound before the fury

**On 9 September 1971, prisoners at Attica Correctional Facility, New York State, rose up and took over the gaol. They declared 'We are men! We are not beasts and we do not intend to be beaten or driven as such'.**

**NICKI JAMESON pays tribute to the prisoners' struggle.**

They held D Yard for four days, organised committees to run food, bedding, sanitation, security, and health care and engaged in a continuous process of democratic, revolutionary debate with a sophisticated loudspeaker system over which any prisoner could address the assembly. Some of the proud, defiant speeches of prisoners such as Flip Crowley and LD Barkley have been immortalised in the moving and inspiring film, *Attica*, and the book *A Time to Die* written by New York Times journalist, Tom Wicker, present at Attica among the outside observers insisted upon by the prisoners.

'The brothers were not "advocating violence," Flip said. "We are advocating communications and understanding." He mentioned Soledad, Kent State, Jackson State. Attica was not different; the brothers of Attica were calling only for what "oppressed people are advocating all over the world... We do not want to rule, we only want to live."

"So we have come to the conclusion... after close study... after much suffering... after much consideration..." In silence so deep that his voice rang back from the surrounding walls, Flip was marching to the inevitable point, taking his listeners with him so that they knew before the words came, what they would have to say: "That if we cannot live as people, then we will try to die like men!" (Tom Wicker: *A Time to Die* pp96-7)

'The entire prison populace - that means each and every one of us here - has set forth to change forever the ruthless brutalisation and disregard for the lives of the prisoners here and throughout the United States. What has happened here is but the sound before the fury of those who are oppressed.' (LD Barkley introducing the prisoners' Five Demands. Quoted Wicker p28)

The system the prisoners were confronting will sound familiar to anyone who knows about conditions in US, or indeed, British gaols. Attica was grossly overcrowded: nearly 2,300 men lived in accommodation designed for 1,600. Fifty four per cent of prisoners were black and 100 per cent of guards were white. Only white prisoners got 'good jobs'. Black magazines and books were censored or stopped. When Puerto Rican prisoners requested books in Spanish, they received Mexican comics. All references to prison conditions were censored out of newspapers received by inmates. Black Muslims were persecuted, treated as 'subversives' and forced to eat pork. The prison diet in general was disgusting, contained almost no vegetables or fruit and was budgeted at 63 cents per day per prisoner.

There was no remotely adequate medical care. The prison doctor ran a morning sick call from behind a mesh screen without giving examinations and usually prescribed aspirin or nothing and dismissed most prisoners as malingerers. Chronic and serious illnesses went completely untreated and the mentally ill had as little care as the physically unwell.

### Political consciousness

Against this background of repression, political consciousness amongst prisoners was developing rapidly. US political prisoner, Ed Mead, writing on the twentieth anniversary of the uprising, describes the mood:

'There had been political study groups in most of the major wings and prisoner consciousness had

been developed to a point where the entire population could act as a single fist. Sam Melville, an Attica prisoner, had been publishing a little underground paper he wrote by hand, with as many carbon copies as he could make. It was called the *Iced Pig*.

Well thought-out demands had been drawn up and submitted to the state's corrections bureaucracy for resolution. When no action was taken by officials, prisoners backed their demands with a ten-day peaceful work strike. The strike ended with a shopping cart full of pious promises that were never honoured. Then on 21 August 1971, when George Jackson was murdered at San Quentin, Attica cons were black armbands and boycotted the mess-hall for a day. All of these actions reflected a high degree of political unity.' ('Remembering Attica, 20 years on' *Prisoners' Legal News* September 1991)

The prisoners who took over Attica took 39 guards hostage to force the prison authorities to negotiate. They were well-treated, provided with food, cigarettes, bedding and water. Black Muslim prisoners mounted a constant guard to prevent any freelance acts of revenge by angry prisoners.

### Five demands

Wicker and other liberal commentators have implied the prisoners' demands were muddled or too extensive but the 'Five Demands' issued on Day One are clear revolutionary demands and are backed up by the '15 Practical Proposals' added later which set out conditions for basic humane treatment of prisoners and could have come from any decent radical manifesto for prison reform.

The five demands are for amnesty from reprisals, transportation to a non-imperialist country, direct intervention by the Federal government so it and not the state authority has jurisdiction over the prison, the complete reconstruction of Attica and the presence of a team of

named observers to mediate negotiations. Only the last demand was met.

When it was clear the prisoners would not give up their demands, the state turned to violence. 13 September 1971 can only be described as a massacre. The National Guard launched a massive attack with helicopters, rifles and CS gas to retake the prison by force. Twenty nine prisoners were killed including Sam Melville and LD Barkley, who was 21 and had been gaoled for a minor cheque forgery and on release returned to prison for breaching parole by driving without a licence. Ten of the hostage guards died in the crossfire. There was no medical treatment for the hundreds of wounded; no blood, plasma or other equipment had been prepared for the prisoners and the only medical personnel present, other than those who rushed the hostages away to hospital, were two vets who happened to be on the premises.

The surviving prisoners were forced to strip naked and lie face down in the mud of the yard. All

Malcolm X once described prisons as universities of revolution and I suppose Attica for me represents the biggest living truth of his words. Before their slaughter the prisoners of Attica had transformed themselves from brutalised and alienated convicts into a politicised brotherhood of freedom-fighters.

On the yard at Attica, amongst the most marginalised and oppressed of racist American society, prisoners discovered their true revolutionary identity and an entirely new relationship as human beings in common struggle - an embryo of revolutionary class struggle found clear definition in a society of captives. Which is why the state responded so murderously. It was attempting to crush an idea and vision as well as a group of human beings - it was attempting to root out and destroy political organisation and consciousness amongst the most dispossessed and desperate in capitalist society.

John Bowden, life prisoner in Britain  
Message to the Terry O'Fallon Memorial Fund meeting on Attica, April 1992

their property was taken from them and destroyed. Watches and glasses were smashed. They were then made to run a gauntlet of guards who beat them with clubs and truncheons.

Just as the British gutter press went wild at completely unsubstantiated rumours of mass murder and emasculation of sex offenders during the 1990 Strangeways uprising, the US press, spurred on by the Corrections Department, spread the story that the ten dead hostages were murdered by the prisoners who had cut their throats. It was also announced that one hostage had been castrated. State autopsies proved what was obvious to the dead guards' distraught families, that they died from gunshot wounds. The mutilated body of the castrated hostage, which an officer told the press he had discovered 'with his testicles in his mouth' was, of course, never produced.

A leading figure in the uprising, Frank 'Big Black' Smith was 'identified' while lying naked in A Yard as the man who had castrated the hostage. Like the other leaders he was marked on the back with a chalked X. He was then systematically tortured by guards who 'lay me on a table and they beat me in my testicles. And they burned me with cigarettes and dropped hot shells on me... They broke glass up in the middle of the hallway and they made people run through the gauntlet. They had police on each side with the clubs they call nigger sticks and they was beating people.'

### Attica Brotherhood

This year Attica has been in the news again. Prisoners who survived the massacre and continue to call themselves the Attica Brotherhood took out a civil law suit in 1974 against the prison and the police on behalf of 1,281 inmates. It took 18 years to get to court and on 4 February this year a jury returned a guilty verdict on the lowest lackey of the four defendants. Former Deputy Warden at Attica, Karl Pheil was found guilty on two counts of

overseeing brutal reprisals against prisoners. Not guilty verdicts were returned on Corrections Commissioner, Russell G Oswald, former warden Vincent Mancusi and Major John Monahan, the former Commissioner of the New York State Police who led the raid on the prison. Both sides are now appealing against portions of the verdict.

The USA is a violent society as recent events in Los Angeles have demonstrated yet again but the assault on Attica was particularly violent for specific reasons. At the time the US state was engaged in a massive operation aimed at smashing totally all forms of organised resistance by oppressed peoples: the Black Panther, Black Muslim and Young Lords Hispanic movements were all heavily represented and supported among the brothers at Attica. The state was determined to stop not only these revolutionary movements but the even more dangerous potential threat of cross-race working class unity being created in the gaols.

### The lessons of Attica

US prisoners have continued to debate the lessons of Attica. Ed Mead blames the weakness of the US left for the ease with which the state was able to employ such violence:

'The rebelling prisoners seemed to be aware of their weaknesses, as they immediately called upon cons in other New York prisons and the progressive community to back their play. This call was made through the mass media, the presence of which was a precondition to negotiations.

While the media and observer team were successful in terms of winning a substantial amount of public opinion in favour of the prisoners, the men in D Yard needed more than moral support. No other prisons went down. And the left did nothing to support the brothers.

Of course ultimate responsibility for the massacre at Attica belongs in the lap of then governor Rockefeller, whose whole family maintains its position in the ruling class by the murder (eg the 1914 Ludowe, Colorado massacre of miners) and exploitation of poor and working people. Even so, Rockefeller would have been hard pressed to order the attack if those claiming to be supportive of the struggle had actively been so. Besides leaving the prisoners vulnerable by not joining them in the yard, the radicals and left leaders failed to mobilise the extensive progressive community in New York City.' (*Prisoners' Legal News*)

Other prisoners' publications prefer to concentrate on the memory of Attica as an inspiration for continued struggle:

'We remember Attica because it was the single greatest act of defiance and independence by prisoners ever recorded in the US. As an essay published in the Black Panther newspaper noted on the first anniversary of Attica: "The prisoners' uprising at Attica was a statement of life, of human concern for survival with dignity, addressing all-too-clearly the backwardness and armed forces of racism, exploitation and death." Notwithstanding the brutal repression present at Attica, the Attica prisoners said NO! We will not be treated as animals anymore. Attica was liberated for four and a half days. This is what we remember Attica for: this is what Attica ultimately stands for. Liberation. Power. Resistance. Above all, let us never forget. Attica equals resistance.' (Walkin' Steel Vol 1 No 2)



# Strangeways trial verdict: savage sentences

The first Strangeways Riot trial is over. News coverage of the proceedings was scarce: the national press, which gave the riot massive coverage, told us only lurid horror stories, which emerged from the prosecution's opening speech, the verdicts and the sentences. We heard virtually nothing of defence arguments; nothing of conditions and attitudes, which drove the prisoners to start the protest that was to shake the system by its roots and put the issue of our lousy gaols on to the political agenda. Was the silence of the press part of a move to put prisons back into the wilderness? ERIC ALLISON reports on the trial and its implications.

The authorities threw a massive security screen around the trial: body-searches for the limited number of spectators allowed into Court 3; a specially constructed dock with bullet-proof glass sides; armed police patrolling the precincts of Manchester Crown Square. All designed to give the public – and especially the jury – the impression the defendants were part of a dangerous and organised group; not simply a number of individuals driven one step too far by disgusting conditions and an oppressive regime.

We can only wonder why Mr Justice Mantell took the view that the scale of the riot had been anticipated by those in the dock and that, 'The riot had nothing to do with real or imagined grievances.' His, much senior, colleague, Lord Justice Woolf (after the most far-reaching inquiry in penal history) was of the firm – and unchallenged by any vested interest – opinion the disturbance was planned as a 'limited protest about prison conditions' and those who planned it – and the majority of the inmates – 'shared the belief that conditions in Strangeways were unacceptable and inhumane.' Perhaps his Lordship should have been called as a witness for the defence.

Virtually all the judge's reported remarks on sentencing concerned violence to Rule 43s: the 'wretched creatures whose offences placed them at the bottom of the prison scrap heap'. I know full well, from conver-

sations with fellow inmates over many years, I will be in a minority when I say this aspect of the riot saddened me. I am sorry the majority of cons don't accept that, in playing the 'numbers' game, they are helping their keepers to divide and rule. (If there were no 'beasts' inside, the screws would invent some – indeed they already do in some malicious cases. They would – and do – try to turn white against black, English against Irish, etc.) Alleged sex-offenders can be fitted up just as easily as alleged terrorists or robbers; and even if they are guilty, 'nonces' need treatment – to stop them from doing it. Prisoners should not judge other prisoners; there are many offences I find distasteful; assuming it were possible, it is not for me to ill-treat those who, allegedly, have committed them. My enemies inside are those who abuse all prisoners.

This is not intended to detract from my total support for those convicted of riot. Firstly, I do not know if they were guilty of the assaults. (I do know the majority of witnesses to the beatings were grasses; and I give an educated guess that their pieces of silver came in the coin of early release.) And secondly, I understand the desire of prisoners to vent their frustration and hatred of the system on someone. Furthermore, if the abuse of those 'wretched creatures' was the main reason for the judge's condemnation of the men in the dock – as his remarks indicate, they should not have stood alone. What about judges who send vulnerable prisoners to gaol, knowing the treatment they get? What about the Home Office which presides over the system which divides and rules in this way? What about screws who inform 'normal' prisoners about other inmates' offences and turn blind eyes to the beatings of 'beasts'? What about the officers on the day at Strangeways who were fleeing the prison in droves, as the protesters were barricading themselves inside the chapel? 'The withdrawal of the staff resulted in the prisoners, much to their sur-

prise, gaining control of the entire prison. This withdrawal from the chapel cannot be faulted, but it is questionable whether the staff should have left the prison.' (Conclusions from the Woolf Report)

The Prison Service is a vital weapon in the armoury of the establishment; Woolf therefore would be bound to mince his words. Those of us who have witnessed and/or felt the brutal actions of the bully boys in Strangeways and other gaols will be more forthcoming; we know that, like all bullies, they are cowards at heart. Why have those who left 'their' prison (and Strangeways was, above all else, a 'screws' nick) in such unseemly haste not been castigated? When they ran, they left those vulnerable prisoners behind them.

What about newspapers such as the Sun (the most-read paper in our nicks. Don't its inmate-readers know the Sun headlined the rioters as 'scum'?) should they not be charged with incitement, when they brand sex-offenders as 'beasts' and 'monsters'? In one report the Sun spoke of such men 'getting the kicking they so richly deserve'. And finally, what about the public? How many would have wept genuine tears when they heard of the 'nonces' being beaten? Not too many Sun readers, that's for sure. No, it is scaling the very summits of hypocrisy that only those in the dock received that scathing condemnation from this ignorant judge.

They got more than condemnation of course. They received savage sentences. They will not have an easy time inside; those in charge of them will not forget how the protesters took control of one of the flagships of the penal fleet; how they humiliated the Prison Service in general and Strangeways in particular. We, prisoners and ex-prisoners must not forget them either. Nor must those who purport to be friends of prisoners disown these men – and there has been a marked and regretful lack of disapprobation at the sentences, from the more established reform groups. We owe them a massive debt. With-



The protesters at Strangeways (above) knew that they could not expect justice from the courts. But punitive verdicts against the Strangeways men did not stop other prisoners from protesting. Below: some of the 12 young prisoners who took to the roof of Winchester gaol on 14 May.



out the Strangeways riot there would have been no Woolf Inquiry.

The findings of that inquiry did not only indicate a measure of understanding of the behaviour of those who took to the roof:

'Riots happen when the requirements of security, control, and justice in prison do not receive proper attention, and are not kept in their proper balance. The 1990 disturbances were a consequence of the failure to do this.'

'As always, the people on the receiving end of this power struggle [between the Governor and the POA in Dartmoor] were the prisoners who saw their regime diminished in a prison where few wanted to be.' (Both quotes from the Inquiry's conclusions)

They also pointed the way to the government promising to implement a massive programme of reform. The reforms do not go far enough, nor will they come quickly enough; but prisoners who take advantage of new

privileges which do come their way should know exactly who to thank: in the words of Geoff Coggan (National Prisoners' Movement) to a Woolf Inquiry seminar:

'I wonder if we can just remind ourselves why we are all here. It is not because somebody on high decided it was about time something was done about the appalling state of our prisons. It is also not because of the many reform groups that are so eloquent around this table – and in that criticism I include ourselves... The only reason we are here is because serving prisoners at Strangeways had reached the limit of their endurance and decided to blow the whistle.'

The Strangeways five and those that follow (and the men from Dartmoor, Cardiff, Bristol etc who took part in the April 1990 uprising and who have suffered or will suffer for it) belong to the only 'party' in the penal system to be punished for the exposed and accepted failings of that system. They must not be forgotten. ■

carcerated by a nationalised industry or a private company. But the superior conditions currently visible at new private gaol, The Wolds, are a blatant public relations exercise. Neither private nor public sector will reproduce them on a large scale, nor, supposing they were ever put out to tender, would it be likely for private companies to bid to run the Wakefields and Parkhursts, or indeed the average overcrowded local prison. Privatisation, if it does spread, will mean increasingly cosy open prisons for 'white-collar criminals' while the majority continue to suffer. Smashing the POA is a laudable aim and definitely in the prisoners' interests. But replacing it by GMBATU members contracted by Group 4 goes as far towards reforming the system as replacing Angela Rumbold by Peter Lloyd.

*One-Off* by Paul Ross and Andrzej Jakubczyk is available from various sources, including FRFI, price £3.50p p&p. (Cheques payable to Lark Publications.) ■

## INSIDE NEWS

### WHITEMOOR

In six weeks here I have had seven nickings and block each time, a dislocated knee-cap and all for the pettiest of things. I was told to eat meat: I told them I was a vegetarian; still they insisted; I took some fish and was given five days in the block. I asked for my canteen and was refused. I went to wash my hair and found my shampoo bottle filled up with washing-up liquid; my talc the same. Then I found a mate of mine had been refused his visit for no reason so something had to be done and solidarity shown.

The block toilets, sinks, lights, spy-holes and windows were smashed up. The next morning they started pushing people, muffled up. We were made to sit in a cell stark naked; my friend and I were paraded stark naked down the corridor. No slop-outs, no exercise, no showers. Four prisoners were taken away in body-belts; six of us are still here.

Kenny Carter

### ALLEN MCGOW

Allen was moved without warning from Hull SU on 12 May to the block at Parkhurst. He had been 'deselected' for the Unit after three years there and was expecting to move closer to his family in Keswick. The Hull SU prisoners (see FRFI 106) have received a request for T-shirts highlighting Allen's situation. ■

## Research into prison suicide

*One-Off* is a research paper into suicide in prison. Unlike other works on the subject, it has not been produced by academics or criminologists; instead the authors are serving prisoners in Hull Special Unit. NICKI JAMESON reviews the paper.

There are two approaches to suicides in prison: one deals with the symptoms, the other with the causes. Prison Service 'suicide prevention techniques' attempt to make it impossible, or at least very difficult, for a prisoner to kill him/herself; anyone genuinely concerned with the problem must look not at prevention but at what circumstances drive prisoners to kill themselves. *One-Off* does this with no holds barred.

The reader is shown a world where individuals, incarcerated maybe for the first time, are so alienated and abused they might believe they have already died and gone to hell. There

are descriptions of antiquated forms of torture: the body-belt – 'a thick leather belt approximately four inches in width which is fastened around the prisoner's waist and which has handcuffs (iron for men, leather for women) attached to a ring on either side'; and more modern torture in 'forcible administration of psychotropic drugs'.

There is a fascinating explanation of the system's two levels of discipline: formally a prisoner may be punished for 22 offences including being 'disrespectful to any officer' and 'disobeying any lawful order'; informally he may be segregated in-

definitely for 'good order and discipline' with no hearing and no reason given.

*One-Off* is a stunning indictment of the whole prison system. However it cannot be reviewed without mentioning a controversial issue which recurs throughout:

'Aside from ethical considerations, we support the idea of the privatisation of the prison system, it can only improve the physical conditions for prisoners generally and provide for a more humane and constructive environment and ultimately put an end to the antiquated customs and draconian practices that the POA espouse and that have prevailed for decades.'

I do not take issue with this from the point of view of Labourite prison reformers, who maintain there is something intrinsically better about a state-owned prison system staffed by members of a trade union. In a capitalist society it makes little difference to prisoners if they are in-



## MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS IN BRUSSELS

### Towards an international dialogue

The international May Day celebrations organised by the Parti du Travail de Belgique (PTB) in Brussels were imaginatively planned so as to create a platform for contact and dialogue between different communist organisations and parties.

A delegation from the RCG and a representative from the Initiative for a Workers' Party of Turkey attended the three-day event, which provided a unique opportunity to establish links and common positions with other communists on an international level. We met Middle Eastern communists from Iran and Palestine; comrades from Kenyan and Ghanaian movements and, from Latin America, the Communist Party of Brazil, which has recently published a pamphlet on the question of international communist unity. We also exchanged documents and views with other European communists such as the Communist Movement of Belgium and the Peace and Socialism Movement of Italy.

The presence of representatives from a number of liberation movements including the PKK and the NDF of the Philippines reinforced the anti-imperialist content of the celebrations.

We had long discussions with a delegation of German communists who emphasised their efforts to achieve unity in the Co-ordinating Committee, which involves six German parties. Comrades from the KPD, the PDS, and the Communist Platform within the PDS told us of the problems they faced with the rise of fascism following the re-unification of Germany. We reproduce an interview with a comrade from the Communist Platform on page 14.

We were particularly struck by the Japanese Communist Party (Left)'s sophisticated understanding of class politics and anti-imperialist awareness. Our discussion centred around the composition of the labour aristocracy in Britain and in Japan, on recent historical developments and on the programmatic priorities of communists in Japan, Britain and Turkey.

There was also a welcome opportunity to hear the representative of the All Russian Communist Party of Bolsheviks. During the conference given by Nina Andreyeva, our delegation raised the question of unity between the two Marxist-Leninist organisations in the ex-Soviet Union, and we were encouraged to hear her express the Bolsheviks' non-sectarian stance.

Our comrade from Turkey presented the representative from the Cuban Communist Party with a Turkish translation of the documents of the Fourth Congress of the PCC, published by his organisation.

Although the organisations came from different trends and traditions, all defined themselves as Marxist-Leninist, and there was a refreshing sense of the need for a real dialogue between different trends to begin, and new unities to be forged. We express our thanks to the comrades of the PTB for organising such an exciting and rewarding political event, and hope that there will be many more such occasions in the future for communists to come together, and begin the process of rebuilding a real communist, international trend in world politics. ■



The Tokyo stock exchange

**T**oday, the workers' movement in Japan faces a turning point. In the struggle for higher wages this spring, many workers – in the railways, local councils and elsewhere – went on strike for the first time in ten years. These strikes are an expression of the accumulated grievances and anger of the lower-strata workers against the longstanding oppression of the monopoly bourgeoisie and the labour bureaucracy. Let us examine the position of the workers' movement in Japan in relation to the development of the lower strata of the working class.

### 1 Japanese imperialism in decline and deepening decay

Japanese imperialism has established its yen-based economic sphere of influence in the Asian newly industrialised countries (NICs) and the ASEAN countries. It aims to secure a Rim-Japan Sea Economic Sphere which will also include the Far Eastern part of the former Soviet Union, northeast China and North and south Korea. Japanese imperialism has also established production bases in the US and the EC. As a result of this expansion by 1989 Japan had the largest net foreign assets in the world, \$293bn.

These developments have aggravated contradictions between Japanese imperialism and the US and European powers. Japan has built up its military force and developed its munitions industry. Now, by enacting a UN peacekeeping co-operation bill, it is openly scheming to send its military forces abroad and preparing, for example, to intervene in Cambodia. These measures are designed to expand and defend its interests abroad by winning the inter-imperialist struggle and suppressing anti-imperialist and socialist forces.

Through the exploitation of the working class and 'easy money' earned by speculation, the Japanese monopoly bourgeoisie has accumulated sufficient funds with which to bribe the government, bureaucracy, Diet members – including government and opposition parties, and the Yakuza gangs. The resulting scandals are being exposed one after the other. The decadence and decay in the country can be seen not only in the core sections of the ruling class – capitalists and politicians. It extends to the whole of society including education, culture, morals, manners and customs.

### 2 Japanese society and the workers' movement divided into upper and lower

The important thing to recognise about Japan, is that Japanese imperialism grants a portion of the super-

# Japanese imperialism and the working class

Japanese imperialism is today a major actor in world politics. Yet in Britain an unforgivable ignorance exists on the character and nature of Japanese imperialism and the class struggle in Japan. For the benefit of our readers, we print below an edited version of a 'Report on the workers' movement in Japan' by Tsugio Takaichi, a leader of the Japanese Communist Party (Left). While not necessarily agreeing with all the political positions contained here, we draw to our readers' attention the splendid Marxist position on the question of Japanese imperialism, internationalism and the labour aristocracy. British socialists should study and learn from the content and method of this document.

profits it squeezes from the lower-strata workers at home and the oppressed peoples abroad to the upper stratum of the working class and the petty bourgeoisie – intellectuals, men of culture, mass media people and others – to foster the labour aristocracy. As a result, Japanese society has been divided into upper and lower. The workers' movement has also been divided into the bourgeois movement of the labour aristocracy, which seeks a stable life under capitalism, and the proletarian movement mainly led by the lower-strata workers which aims to fundamentally change society.

According to government statistics, the working class in Japan in 1990 numbered about 48.35m. Of these, 10 per cent or 4.83m are upper-strata workers whose annual income is more than 7 million yen. They are employed primarily in the public services and by big business. About 40 per cent of workers constitute the lower-strata of workers whose annual income is less than 3 million yen. They are the lower stratum of regular workers in big business, low-ranking public sector workers, workers in medium and small-sized companies, part-time workers, temporary workers, day labourers, transport workers, foreign migrant workers and so on. There are about 5.22 million part-time workers, 1.5 million workers in medium- and small-sized companies with less than 30 employees and 200,000 foreign workers.

Take a factory with 1,000 workers in Japan for instance. The breakdown of employees is roughly as follows: 100 middle- and low-ranking managerial officers 400 regular workers, 300 workers from subcontract companies, 200 temporary part-time and foreign workers. There is discrimination in the working conditions, wages, working hours and fringe benefits between regular workers and subcontract employees, temporary workers, part-time and foreign workers. The latter's employment is totally insecure and they are liable to be sacked according to the needs of the business cycle.

These lower-strata workers in Japan are impoverished. They are forced to work between 50-100 hours overtime a month, and cannot make ends meet without both husband and wife working. Take the case of an average worker family in a local city which is composed of a 40 year old

worker, his wife and daughter – a high school student. He earns about \$1,385 a month as take-home wage, including overtime allowances for 50 hours. His wife earns \$769 as a part-timer. As a result the net income of the family is \$2,154 a month. The family's main expenditures are about \$592 for food, \$326 for rent, \$185 for lighting and fuel, \$44 for the phone, \$274 for education and \$296 for care for their parents. They also pay \$333 for life insurance. Moreover the worker has to pay for lunch and cigarettes. As a result the family budget is always in the red. Long hours of intensified labour has been imposed on workers in almost every industry where they have to work between 10 and 11 hours a day.

The 8-hour day, won all over the world at the cost of many lives, has been destroyed in Japan. Due to capitalist rationalisation and micro-electronic equipment the number of workers in factories has been reduced enormously. Simultaneously labour has been intensified day and night with an increase in on-the-job accidents. In 1990 alone, 2,550 workers were killed in such accidents.

Many of the lower-strata workers are not unionised and have no rights. They can be sacked without recourse. Attempts to organise unions result in

leaders being sacked or transferred to distant rural factories or isolated in other ways. The government has introduced labour legislation enabling employers to impose long hours and nightwork on women workers. It has reduced budgets for health and child care as a result of which even greater burdens of domestic labour, child-rearing and care for the elderly are thrown onto women workers.

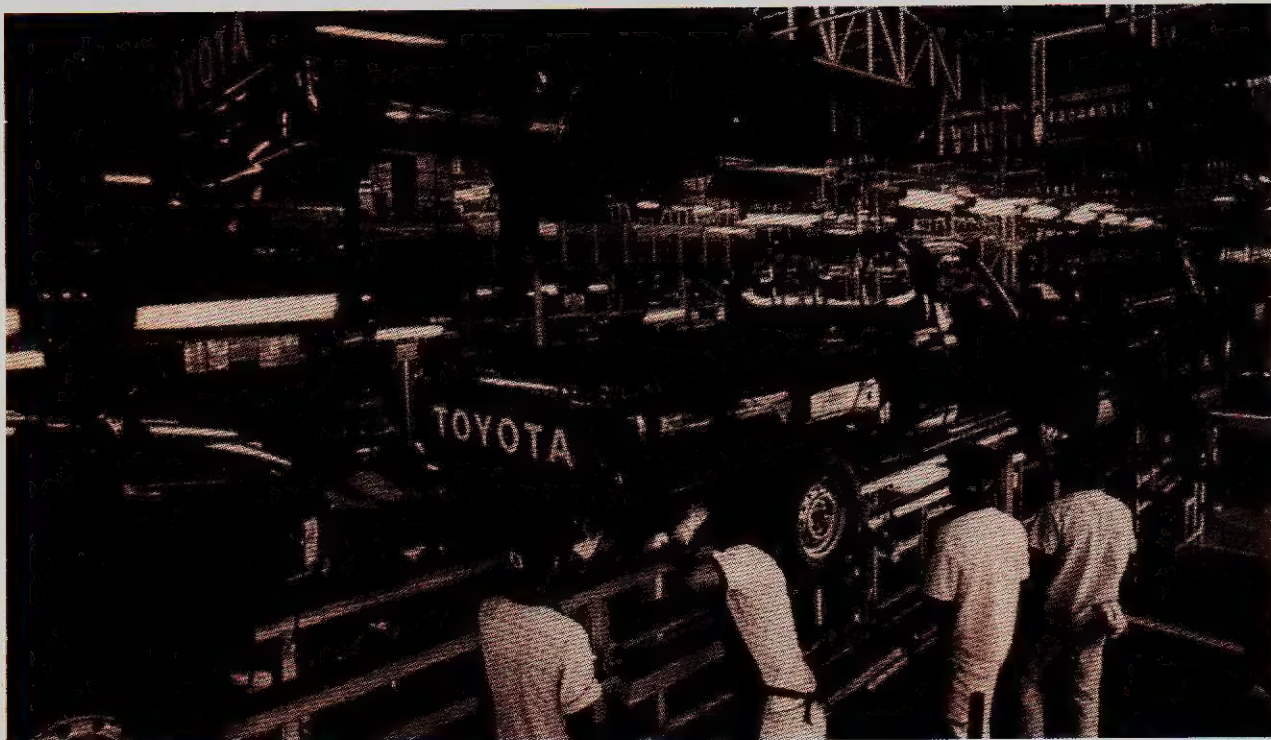
Foreign migrant workers have no legal rights. They are exploited as a cheap labour force and in their numbers have increased rapidly in the past years. Only 50,000 of about 200,000 foreign workers possess visas. The remainder are illegal workers subject to control by the police. In the current economic crisis many Japanese, Filipino, Brazilian and Iranian workers and others from the Middle East and Latin America can be sacked and thrown onto the streets.

In contrast, the labour aristocrats have expensive houses, second houses, luxury cars and privately-owned sailboats and enjoy golf and travelling abroad. They think that no country is freer and richer than Japan. They do not hesitate to become more prosperous at the expense of others. In order to sustain their privileged life they encourage the spread of

Peasant farmers, part of the lower strata







Assembling Japanese cars in Thailand

chauvinism enabling Japanese imperialism to continue its economic plunder abroad and prepare for new aggressive wars.

The Japanese labour bureaucrats represent the interests of the labour aristocracy. The Japanese trade unions are organised into two major blocs, the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Rengo - 8 million members) and the National Confederation of Trade Unions (Zenroren - 1.5 million members). Rengo is led by right-wing social democrats while Zenroren is led by modern revisionists. Both of these national centres act as political and social props for the monopoly bourgeoisie's control of the working class. In addition there is an organisation for the coordination of joint struggles by trade unions, the National Trade Union Council (0.5 million members). However only 25 per cent of the Japanese workforce is organised, mostly in big business and the public sector.

When the Gulf War broke out, Rengo organised rallies calling for the complete implementation of the UN resolutions that supported the bombardment against Iraq. Nowadays, they do not hesitate to say: 'We should pass the UN peacekeeping operations bill through the Diet as early as possible as a contribution to the international community'. Rengo is also determined to split and destroy the workers' movement internationally. It has recently established an international labour foundation with Japan's ODA. This means that Rengo is a supporter of Japanese imperialist aggression abroad. During the Gulf War, the labour bureaucrats of Zenroren also advocated 'sanctions against Iraq' and called for 'a peaceful solution through the UN'. Though differing in colour from Rengo, this bloc is also a supporter of Japanese imperialist aggression.

### 3 The historical process of the postwar workers' movement

In 1945, after the devastation of the Second World War, the Japanese working class undertook the struggle for the establishment of a new Japanese society. Unfortunately, at the time the Communist Party of Japan (CPJ), affected by modern revisionism, failed to take an anti-imperialist stand and welcomed the US occupation forces as liberation forces. However, rank and file members and the working class did fight on a wide ranging programme. They fought to win Japanese independence from US imperialism and to build a workers' and farmers' government. They fought in defence of peace against the US which launched wars against the Asian people using Japan as a base. And they fought to improve the conditions of the working class. This process culminated in the historical struggles against the revisionism of the Japan-US Security Treaty in 1960.

The struggle against a new Japan-US Security Treaty was aimed primarily at opposing US imperialism and the revival of Japanese imperialism. The US hoped to use this treaty as the first step in a tripartite military alliance, incorporating Japan and south Korea, against the people of Asia. The Anti-Treaty struggles of the working class developed into the biggest political battles since the end of the war. In opposition to the Treaty, 6-8 million workers went on national political strikes and students and intellectuals staged protests. All this was done in the face of bloody repression.

This struggle overthrew the Kishi cabinet and prevented US President Eisenhower from visiting Japan. It also assumed an international dimension with the struggle against US imperialism being joined by Asian forces including the Chinese, south Korean and Filipino peoples. However, as these struggles receded, the monopoly bourgeoisie set about destroying the workers' movement with the aid of the labour aristocracy. It thoroughly oppressed workers in the factories after carrying out mass sackings through a process of capitalist rationalisation.

In those days, the leadership of the CPJ rejected the line of overthrowing imperialism and establishing a socialist society. It advocated instead a peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism and opposed proletarian internationalism with the nationalist catch-phrase of 'self-determination'. In this context, the CPJ leadership was responsible for the defeat of these revolutionary mass movements. It eventually became an opponent of the working class and the people.

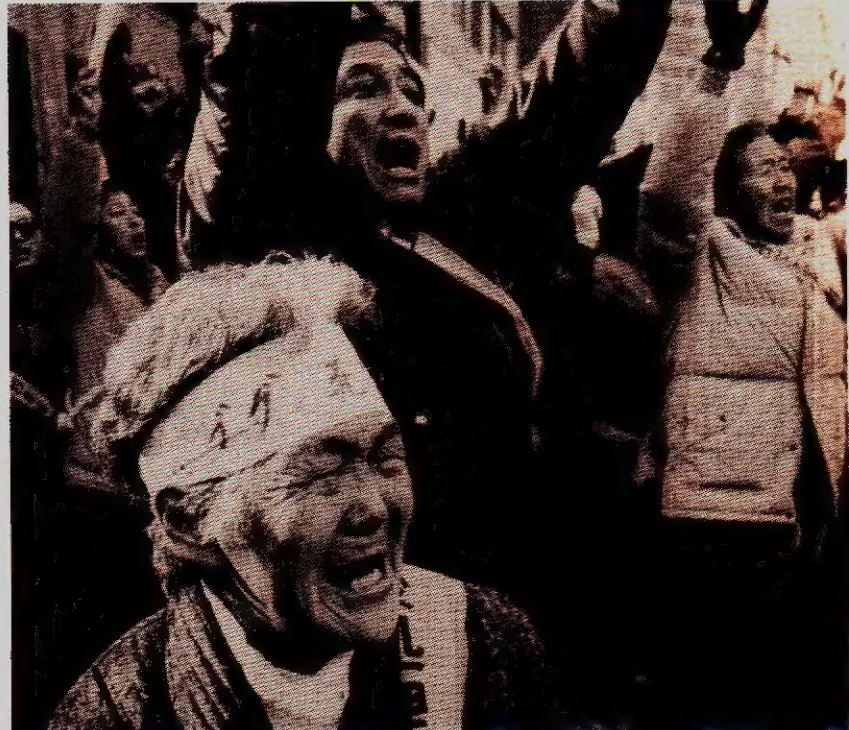
However, the broad masses of the lower-strata workers started to fight back again during the second half of the 1960s and the 1970s. They fought

on many fronts opposing the aggressive US war in Vietnam, the automatic extension of the US-Japan Security Treaty in 1970 and the agreement to return Okinawa to Japan. They also fought for the right to strike and for increased wages. These struggles were joined by students who fought against the imperialist reorganisation of the universities. Nevertheless the Japanese workers' movement suffered a setback after the early 1970s.

The stagnation of the present workers' movement has been brought about by two factors. First is the fact that an upper stratum of workers and union leaders have been bribed and turned into a labour aristocracy by the monopoly bourgeoisie. The other is that modern revisionism, by abandoning the struggle against imperialism and for socialism, has split the workers' movement by implanting reformism and opportunism which has helped right-wing social democracy. We are now seeing a break from this lengthy period of stagnation with the strike of railway workers this April.

### 4 The real nature of the anti-socialist offensive comes to light

In the period stretching from the Tiananmen Square incident to the collapse of the Soviet Union, Japanese imperialism intensified anti-socialist propaganda using the mass media and pro-government academics to popularise the supra-class slogan 'democracy, freedom and human rights.' The central leadership of the trade unions which once espoused class slogans, supported the anti-socialist campaign claiming that the contradiction between socialism and capitalism was old-



Protests in South Korea against Japanese war crimes

fashioned. The Miyamoto revisionists even asserted in their 19th congress their aim was not to build a socialist Japan but a capitalist Japan where people can lead peaceful, rich and free lives. They even unconditionally welcomed the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Today the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe are plagued by unemployment, the collapse of production, ruination of agriculture, cuts in social welfare and an aggravation of national conflicts. Meanwhile the capitalist countries where the imperialists were talking about the 'end of socialism' and the 'superiority of capitalism' are now being hit by a deep overproduction crisis. The class character of the imperialist slogan of 'democracy, freedom and human rights' is becoming clear for all to witness.

It is in this context that advanced workers and conscientious intellectuals must begin to discuss the prospect for socialism.

### 5 Tasks of the workers' movement in Japan

The important task today is to lead the rising struggles of the lower strata with a strategy of overthrowing Japanese imperialism and establishing a socialist society. To this end we must reaffirm our class line which aims to replace the monopoly bourgeoisie's private ownership of the means of production with the public ownership by society. We must insist on the necessity of abolishing the system of wage slavery and fight to build an alliance with farmers, fishermen, small traders and small-manufacturers and the oppressed nations of Asia.

Victory in the Japanese working class struggle to overthrow imperial-

ism and build socialism must rest on the victory of the international workers' movement. First of all, we must defend and support Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea and China which continue to hold to socialism. Moreover we must strengthen the anti-imperialist struggle by building revolutionary unity with the working class and peoples in the colonial and dependent countries and the working class in the advanced capitalist countries. It is particularly indispensable that the Japanese working class unite with workers in Asia to develop a joint struggle against the common enemy, ie Japanese imperialism. This imperialism has become fat with the superprofits squeezed from the oppressed nations of the world, including Asia. It has fostered a labour aristocracy with a portion of its profits in order to control the working class. The progressive workers' movements in the Third World including the KMT in the Philippines and the National Council of Trade Unions in south Korea exercise a prominent influence in breaking down the ruling system of imperialism. They are very important allies of the Japanese working class. The Japanese working class must also consolidate class unity with foreign workers in Japan and struggle for the defence of their rights and for the fair application of all Japanese laws to them. It must also oppose all discrimination and prejudice against them. ■

### New Books

#### Marxism-Leninism: the Legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution

edited by Eddie Abrahams

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The rebirth of Japanese militarism





# '...experiencing brutal capitalism'

**Renate Engelmann** is a member of the Communist Platform within the Partei Demokratischen Sozialisten (PDS) in the former German Democratic Republic. She spoke in an individual capacity to **Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!**

**I**n the ex-GDR we are now experiencing standard brutal capitalism and all that goes with it: unemployment, poverty. In the GDR there were no dismissals. Now anyone who still has a job lives in constant fear of losing it because many of the East German companies still operating are due to be closed, a minority because the machines are too old or the buildings useless, but in most cases because the firms in East Germany are genuine competition for those in West Germany.

There are a great number of unemployed women and their situation is even worse than that of unemployed men. In the GDR all women who wanted to work did so but the majority were employed in the so-called low-waged sectors: as creche workers, health workers, primary school teachers and shop assistants and even in the GDR these occupations were very meagrely paid although they provided enough to live on as rents were very low, basic foodstuffs cheap, child care virtually free. Unemployment money is calculated on 80 per cent of the net wage earned in the GDR and many women now live below the poverty line.

## Strikes

**I**n Germany now there are extensive public service strikes; workers in the metal industry have



also joined in but so far these struggles are only taking place in West Germany.

The 'unification' of Germany must be paid for. In the East people are being asked to tighten their belts; in the West to share their 'well-being' with their poor brothers and sisters in the East and as far as fightback is concerned West and East are divided. In East Germany the primary demand is equal pay for equal work as workers earn between 40 and 60 per cent of the salaries in the West. But as long as

this demand comes only from the East, there will be further splitting of the workers' movement and workers in the West will claim they would have to pay out of the mouths of their children which of course they don't want to do.

In East Germany there are a host of steel works where sometimes the plants are occupied, sometimes there are lightning strikes, demands are made. But the struggles have been waged in isolation from one another. Unless employees of the individual

firms themselves communicated with one another there was no exchange of information. The union and union hierarchy forbade or prevented it. They wanted to ensure workplace struggles didn't spread to a whole region or a whole 'Land' because they would no longer be in control.

It is an urgent task to provide active support for such actions by, for example, informing workplaces in other regions so solidarity strikes are organised. Or calling on the unemployed in the region to give solidarity by demonstrating outside the factory. We believe that we can build a mass base through this work; we can talk to people about our conceptions and demands and they can talk to us. Many have great prejudices against the PDS because it came from the SED and they blame the SED for what has happened. But we have to do everything to speak to people about it because if we crawl away we achieve nothing.

## Fascism

**I**n the GDR there was no such thing, not just because hatred for foreigners didn't enter most people's heads, but also because anti-fascism and anti-racism were in the constitution and if fascist tendencies did rise up they were very severely dealt with. There was also no need to be aggressive against other people because the root causes of neo-Nazism and racism didn't exist: there wasn't this situation where some people have jobs or money, and others don't, and the people who are afraid of losing their jobs hate those they think will take them away: foreigners and the unemployed. There is incredibly fertile soil for fascism and racism and the whole movement has grown very strong, especially in East Germany.

The PDS has constantly tried to play the problem down, saying you can't compare it with the period before 1933, but if you look at everything objectively: unemployment is as bad or worse than in the Weimar Republic; the neo-Nazis are

as exultant as in the Twenties; people are assaulted, beaten up, murdered because they have different colour skin or speak a different language.

## Demands of the Communist Platform within the PDS

- the right to work for all
- the working week to be immediately reduced to 35 hours
- further shortening of the working week to 30 hours within two or three years
- a free education system for all
- free music lessons, sports education and other activities which develop individual talents
- affordable housing for all
- free childcare
- the abolition of paragraph 21 of the part of the (West) German constitution which prevents abortion and which will probably impact on the East from 1993

## Possibilities for unity among communists

**F**or about a year and a half there has been a standing conference of Marxist parties in Berlin. It began by setting itself the task of finding through discussion where we had similar positions and building these positions towards united action and ultimately towards building a united communist party.

In addition members of the conference, parties and groups and editorial boards of revolutionary newspapers, together with other communists, have created another initiative: 'Communists writing communists'. This is very hopeful and seems to be a development towards socialism through struggle through general strike for example. The PDS won't carry out that kind of struggle and we have to ensure we gather all the genuine progressive communists and socialists from the PDS into a real German Communist Party. The KPD shares this aim and does the 'Communists writing communists' initiative. ■

# Germany: Europe's strong man falters

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

The German public sector workers' strike in April and May and current negotiations in the engineering industry highlight the crisis besetting both the German ruling and working class. Germany, the strong man of Europe, is faltering. Its steadfast march to head a European superpower is being checked by a rising tide of political, economic and social troubles. This crisis has been aggravated by the massive cost of German reunification - a 1989 marginal budget surplus is now a DM45bn deficit. At the root of its malaise is the capitalist economic crisis. The German economy is beginning to suffer the effects of international recession - the collapse of foreign markets, a slowdown in the domestic boom and increasing competition from rival and lower cost economies.

The German ruling class is responding with an attack on working class living standards and conditions. In the private sector a process of rationalisation has begun to reduce the workforce, lower costs and increase competitiveness. Volkswagen plans to cut its workforce

by 12,500 in the next five years and Mercedes Benz by 20,000. German capital is also shifting production to low-wage economies; Metallgesellschaft, for example, a mining, metal and engineering group, plans to shift production of car-parts to Brazil and France. Employers are seeking to depress wages, one declaring 'What we need is a couple of years with no wage increases'.

In the public sector, Finance Minister Theo Waigel, calling for 'iron savings', announced a major austerity programme to cut the budget deficit to DM25bn by 1995. He also placed new limits on unemployment benefit and cancelled all subsidies to the Federal Labour Office responsible for unemployment benefit, youth training and job creation. Waigel announced a DM1.5bn cut in state spending next year and declared that any new project - reform of railways, old age care, new family and housing allowances - must henceforth be self-financing. To partially offset the cost of German reunification, the ruling class introduced a [reunification] 'solidarity tax', in addition to increased unemployment contributions on top of increases in VAT, petrol, tobacco and income tax.

## SOCIALISTS AND THE TRADE UNION STRUGGLE

Whilst supporting the public workers' strike socialists must recognise that these strikes have highlighted the divisions between German and immigrant workers, between low and high paid and between workers in West and East. According to Ursula Engelen-Kefer, deputy chair of the DGB, the German Trade Union Federation the 'real income of workers sank in 1991 by 0.5 per cent, and in 1992 will hardly show any real growth.' However, the attack on the working class does not affect all sectors evenly. Engelen-Kefer notes that 'professionals, the self-employed and civil servants, as well as the higher paid' workers have been 'very largely spared the costs [of reunification]'. The brunt is born by foreign workers, lower paid workers and East German workers in particular where wages are only 40-60 per cent of the average while prices are as high, and where unemployment is nearly 50 per cent.

An effective, political response in defence of the German working class against the mounting capitalist offensive would have to take up these questions as well as the rise of racism and



fascism and the destruction of welfare facilities in eastern Germany. The fact is that the public workers' strike was limited, sectional and economic in character. Indeed it was fought only on behalf of the better off sections of the public sector. The öTV union ballot showed substantial sections of the lowest paid - tram-drivers, refuse disposal workers - rejecting the

deal while the better paid - the railway workers, the postal workers, policemen and white collar clerical workers - accepted.

Strikes such as we have recently witnessed, even if successful, defend only the immediate interests of some sections of the working class and then only for short periods. To effectively confront the oncoming juggernaut of German capital, a

working class political movement is necessary which develop political unity among lower paid workers - East, West, the foreign workers, women forced back into home, the homeless and unemployed. Only such a movement would be capable of revolutionary action against capitalism in defence of the whole working class. ■



## Irish POWs' birthdays

Patrick Magee B75881  
HMP Full Sutton, York  
YO4 1PS 29 May  
Paul Holmes 119034  
HMP Full Sutton 22 June  
Peter Sherry B75880  
HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle  
of Wight PO30 5NX 30 June  
Brian Keenan B2630  
HMP Albany, Newport, Isle of  
Wight PO30 5RS 17 July

## RCG Public Meeting

### RACISM, RIOTS AND REVOLT The oppressed fight back

From the USA to Britain, the cause  
of the unrest is imperialism!

7pm Thursday 28 May  
Harlesden Library, Craven Park,  
London NW10  
(Harlesden tube or BR)

## IRISH FORUMS

The first two in a series of  
discussions around  
**Ireland:**  
the key to the British revolution

Wednesday 10 June:  
**Marx and Engels on Ireland**

Wednesday 1 July:  
**The Easter Rising**  
Both 7.30pm, the North Room,  
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,  
London WC1  
(nearest tube Holborn)

## RCG Communist Forum

The fifth in a series of monthly  
discussions on topical issues  
addressed from the Marxist-Leninist  
standpoint.

### Crisis in education: what future for the working class?

Sunday 28 June 2.30pm  
Marchmont Centre, Marchmont  
Street, London WC1 (nearest tube  
Russell Square) £1/50p

For details of any of these meetings  
phone 071 837 1688

## Hands off Cuba!

1-8 June  
**A week of solidarity with Cuba**  
Petitioning against the imperialist US  
blockade and collecting material aid.

**South London**  
Thursday 4 June:  
Sainsbury's, Balham High Road,  
Balham, London SW12 6.30pm

Friday 5 June:  
Asda, Clapham Junction, London  
SW11 6.30pm

Saturday 6 June:  
**Hands off Cuba! street rally**  
meet 11am Brixton tube, SW2.

**North London**  
Thursday 4 June:  
Sainsbury's, Camden High Street,  
Camden 6.30pm

Saturday 6 June  
**Hands off Cuba! street rally**  
Upper Street, Islington  
11am-1pm  
(meet opposite Islington Green)

If you would like more information  
about any of our other activities on  
Cuba, or would like to organise your  
own material aid collection, contact  
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WC1N 3XX or tel: 071 837 1688

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# LETTERS Write to FRFI BCM Box 5909, London, WC1N 3XX

## Stop strip searches!

**A**Chairde,  
During seven years of  
imprisonment in England, we've  
each been strip searched  
hundreds of times. Yet for all their  
searching, nothing has ever been  
found. Whilst on remand, we  
received up to five strip searches  
per day, some within minutes of  
each other. We were subjected to  
cell searches and strip searches in  
the morning, another cell and  
strip search in the afternoon and  
stripped again after legal and  
social visits. Our situation was  
highlighted by various pressure  
groups and on one occasion we  
had almost a hundred MPs  
demanding an enquiry into the  
issues of strip searching in  
Brixton. We have since exhausted  
all domestic legal channels and

our solicitor is currently working  
on our strip search for Europe.

Although not as intensively, we  
have been subjected to strip  
searching throughout the  
subsequent years. We're stripped  
on leaving the prison and on  
returning, during cell searches  
and cell moves and after visits.  
The latter applies only to we two  
POWs despite the fact we're in a  
wing with another 20 women who  
share the same visiting area. This  
measure was intensified around  
the same time as recent events in  
Maghaberry raising questions as  
to the Authorities' motivation.  
We've no way of calculating the  
psychological damage caused by  
these strip searches. Furthermore,  
the damage inflicted by these  
strips, when reinforced with  
physical assault, is akin to rape.  
To have to strip without physical  
force for these searches is

degrading and enraging, but to be  
forcibly stripped naked by four or  
more screws must reap havoc on  
one's sense of control. The  
Authorities are aware of the  
potentially disempowering  
impact of these assaults. The  
Home Office is well aware of the  
high level technological security  
devices available. Detectors, X-  
ray machines and the like should  
be sufficient to indicate the  
presence or absence of  
contraband, yet they prefer to  
physically assault.

Is the Northern Ireland Office  
suggesting that their security is so  
lax in Maghaberry that they  
suspected all of these women of  
being in possession of  
contraband? The fact that nothing  
was found proves that not even  
one woman was in possession of  
anything illegal. When prisoners  
are given a direct order they may

accept or refuse. If one were told  
to scrub the floor and refused, one  
would not be physically forced to  
do so. There are procedures  
within gaols for dealing with  
refusals of such orders. The  
screws stormed the wings in  
Maghaberry in a frenzied,  
perverted assault.

Strip searching must be giving  
the Authorities in the NIO and  
Home Office some sort of warped  
dividends for them to sustain this  
policy. In seven years of  
unnecessary abuse, we, Martina  
and Ella, realised that even when  
we finally finish this life  
sentence, we'll ultimately have to  
deal with any lasting effects of  
these assaults on our bodies.  
Where is the justification for this  
kind of torture?  
MARTINA ANDERSON AND  
ELLA O'DWYER  
HMP Durham

## Communists and Scottish nationalism

I sincerely hope that in the light  
of the recent national and local  
elections Comrade Reid (Letters,  
FRFI 106) is able to accept that a  
'massive nationalist vote in  
Scotland' did not take place. The  
Union of the imperialists remains  
in a very real way, and the  
concept of Scottish nationalism  
undermining this remains exactly  
that - a concept, an idea in  
individual minds which is not a  
material, social or political force.  
This also applies to communism  
in Britain today.

As a communist in Scotland the  
relationship between the working  
class here and nationalism had to  
be assessed. Firstly, it was  
certainly not a question of  
nationalism in Scotland being in  
any sense anti-imperialist as the  
struggle in Ireland undoubtedly  
is. Despite this, was there still an  
inherently progressive and  
democratic content to the demand  
for Scottish self-determination?  
Yes, undoubtedly so; but of such  
an abstract and bourgeois nature

that at this particular time and  
that particular election our  
assessment and advice was that  
the working class of Scotland  
would be advancing its own  
interests by uniting in struggle  
with the rest of the working class  
in England and Wales, however  
abstract that struggle is at the  
moment. In other words  
communists, while recognising  
the right of the Scottish nation to  
self-determination were not  
actually advocating separation at  
this point. Lenin uses the analogy  
of communists supporting the  
right to divorce but refraining  
from advocating it in every  
instance. In this instance as  
communists we were honestly  
attempting to assess the interests  
of the working class and do not  
have to apologise if this is  
perceived as a 'tired and timeless  
argument'.

Comrade Reid has to make up  
her mind about her own  
assessment of the interests of the  
Scottish working class and be  
clear about them. Either we are in  
the vanguard of struggle in  
Britain, or we stand alongside the  
English and Welsh working class.  
Scotland had to fight alone for a

year against the Poll Tax most  
importantly because it was  
actually introduced here a year  
earlier than in the rest of Britain. I  
am surprised, given the actual  
level of class consciousness and  
struggle throughout Britain, of  
which she is well aware, that she  
has to ask why the English and  
Welsh working class did not unite  
with the Scottish working class to  
strangle the Poll Tax at birth. The  
phrasing itself is distinctly  
reminiscent of the exaggerated  
inflation of class struggle so  
beloved of the Militant Tendency.

Unless, of course, I allow  
myself to become suspicious too,  
and suggest that Comrade Reid is  
offering us a version of that real  
phony and chauvinist argument  
about Scotland being somehow  
more advanced politically and  
inherently socialist - an  
argument frequently driven by  
Labour and SNP lefts after a few  
swallows of lager. Perhaps  
Comrade Reid down there in the  
Big Smoke has succumbed to that  
wistful sentimentality for old  
Caledonia so cleverly exploited  
by Tennants, but I know she is  
more serious than that.

In the absence of struggle

anywhere in Britain against  
capitalism and imperialism, we  
still have to assess what is in the  
interest of the working class. At  
this time this is a very abstract  
process. What did seem concrete  
and materially real in Scotland  
was that nationalism was a  
spectacularly inflated issue  
which, like the Labour Party,  
offered no way forward for the  
working class. The absence of any  
independent working class  
standpoint, a communist  
standpoint, meant an emphasis  
on exposing the reactionary and  
chauvinist nature of the  
nationalists' fundamentally  
bourgeois character. Future  
struggle and the development of a  
communist movement in  
Scotland and elsewhere in Britain  
will of course address this  
imbalance. This will actually  
decide the question of Scottish  
self-determination. We cannot,  
without ceasing to be  
communists, abandon our  
struggle for the concrete unity of  
the working class to defeat  
imperialism.

MIKE TAYLOR  
Dundee, Scotland

## Sectarian manoeuvres in Cuba Solidarity Campaign

In 1985 I saw the Anti-Apartheid  
Movement expel its most active,  
most dynamic and most deeply  
committed local group of activists  
because it believed it was a front  
for the RCG. We were viewed with  
alarm by the then CPGB and  
Labour hacks who ran the AAM as  
a challenge to their suffocating  
grip on the movement. Today,  
City of London Anti-Apartheid  
Group is still outside the South  
African Embassy, campaigning  
for majority rule. Where is the  
AAM?

I mention this because I sat  
through the Cuba Solidarity  
Campaign (formerly BCRC) AGM  
on 9 May with a depressing sense  
of déjà vu. Democratic measures  
such as taking motions in parts  
where a majority wished to do so,  
were ruled out. Equal Opps  
policies were substituted for anti-  
imperialist ones. And always, the  
tired refrain: the need for a 'broad  
front'.

Let us be quite clear. The 'broad  
front' is only ever broad enough  
for those the Labour Party and  
assorted liberals will find  
acceptable. It is a wrecking tactic,  
designed to keep out communists,  
anti-imperialists, political  
undesirables - even ordinary  
members who just want to get  
involved. Indeed, we were

earnestly assured that allowing,  
for example, members to attend  
NEC meetings (the only forums  
for discussion that appear to exist  
in the CSC) as observers would in  
fact be profoundly 'anti-  
democratic'!

Not that this lot would  
recognise democracy if it stood up  
and waved a voting card. The day  
before the AGM, I was warned by  
the CSC Chair that the CPB, in  
particular, would not be voting  
for me in the NEC elections  
because 'they remembered South  
Africa' (presumably the way  
Texans remember the Alamo).  
And sure enough, come two  
seconds before the vote, an  
alternative nomination was made.  
That the woman in question was  
not eager to stand was in the eyes  
of these sectarians far less  
important than keeping the RCG  
out. Several independent activists  
later admitted they were shocked  
by the blatancy of this sectarian  
manoeuvre.

The solidarity that has been  
achieved in Britain already lags  
lamentably behind the  
imaginative and popular  
campaigns being waged in other  
countries. By all means,  
comrades, mobilise in your  
unions, if that's where you can  
build support. Get Labour MPs' and  
trade union leaders' names  
on your petitions. The defence of  
Cuba requires and deserves  
support from every quarter. But if  
you try to hang on to the coat-tails  
of the Labour Party at the expense  
of building an active, grass-roots  
campaign, if you manoeuvre to

exclude those who are willing to  
give unstinting, principled anti-  
imperialist solidarity to the Cuban  
Revolution, then you will  
deliberately have destroyed any  
possibility of such a movement  
being built, sacrificing the  
interests of the Cuban people on  
the altar of your opportunism.  
CAT WIENER  
South London RCG

## Labour should accept defeat

Well, many people guessed the  
Tories would win the last General  
Election. It's because the Labour  
Party leadership has tried to hold  
capitalism, and has caused  
nothing but frustration for the  
working class - but then, they  
have been doing that for years.

So now Labour - or what's left  
of it - are fighting each other for  
the leadership. What a lot of  
nonsense. Only the Tories won at  
the polling station; Labour should  
accept defeat once and for all.  
Since 1979, young working class  
kids have known that neither  
party is offering them any future,  
only wars or mass  
unemployment. Labour lost lots  
of votes because young working  
class people don't want to be let  
down once again. Won't Labour  
ever get the message?  
ELLEN LUBY  
Camden, North London

## CHOOSE THE

# RCG

If you believe that the treachery  
of the opportunist British Labour  
and trade union movement must  
be challenged, then there is no  
alternative - **Join the RCG!**

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# HANDS OFF IRELAND!

## Parachute Regiment on the rampage

**The British army Parachute Regiment has again been deployed to terrorise the nationalist community. Notorious for their murder of 14 unarmed people on Bloody Sunday twenty years ago, they were unleashed on the Coalisland community on 12 May. SÉAN Ó MAOLDHOMNAIGH reports.**

In a planned revenge attack after one of their members lost his legs in an IRA landmine explosion, they sealed off the town. They then emerged from the local police station with batons drawn, smashing up cars, windows, pubs and as many Irish heads as they came across.

In the Venue Bar near the police station a witness tells how he heard the door banging and 'then the door burst open and three or four paras came running in carrying white cudgels... The landlord... asked them what it was all about... so they grabbed him... kicking and beating him all the way out to the street.' The job done, they were recalled to barracks.

Complaints about the incident to Michael Mates, the new Security Minister, were brushed off as 'spurious claims'; he denied there was a policy of getting tough in areas where the IRA operates and paid tribute to the behaviour of soldiers in the north. However, both local unionist and SDLP MPs condemned the attack, fearing that rather than weakening, it will bolster support for the IRA.

Meanwhile in Craigavon, one of the longest running legal cases in the north has once again reopened. The inquest into the deaths of three unarmed men shot in a British 'shoot-to-kill' operation in 1982 is still being pushed from pillar to post. It emerged that the notes taken by the undercover officers at the time of the shooting have all been destroyed. The inquest also revealed that, when the same officers returned their weapons, 109 rounds of ammunition were missing. One look at the car driven by the three men shows clearly where the ammunition went.

The inquest, reconvened under a new coroner, the fifth since it began, is guaranteed to achieve no results. All thanks to a decision taken in 1988 by Sir Patrick Mayhew in his role as Attorney

General, that while there was evidence of attempts to pervert the course of justice, there would be no prosecutions of police officers! Thus are all instances of army brutality and murder whitewashed by the British judiciary.

Beneath the veneer of Patrick Mayhew's media-hyped talks of a solution to the situation in the north, Britain's role in Ireland carries on unabated, as brutal and terroristic as ever. ■



## Judith Ward free

**Judy Ward was finally released on bail on Monday 11 May. She had been held in prison for 18 years following her conviction in 1974 for the M62 coach bombing. PAM ROBINSON reports.**

In the wake of a massive IRA bombing campaign in Britain in the early 1970s the press was used to whip up vicious anti-Irish hysteria and issued the cry for 'justice to be done'. Judith Ward was among those used to satisfy that cry, despite overwhelming evidence which was already known to the state about her unstable and suggestible nature. The police had on previous occasions thrown her out of police stations where she had made false confessions, and considered her to be a highly imaginative nuisance. In the hysterical aftermath of the wave of IRA bombings

in 1974, such a nuisance suddenly became useful. That 'justice' was not done did not matter. It was enough that justice be seen to be done.

Evidence which has 'come to light' in the ongoing appeal has served to expose the lengths to which the British state will go when it is on the attack. Facts revealed include the continued reliance on the long-since discredited forensic evidence of Dr Frank Skuse, whose unreliable tests were used to frame the Birmingham 6 and were discredited at their appeal. It was also revealed for the first time that she attempt-

ed suicide twice while on remand awaiting trial for the bombing, further proof of her instability but kept secret at the time.

The British state has consistently failed to apprehend IRA volunteers responsible for bombings in Britain. The frame-ups reveal both the desperation engendered among the police and judiciary by this situation and the state's exploitation of the situation to criminalise the whole Irish community and anyone, like Judy Ward, who supported them in their fight to be free from British rule. ■

## The iron fist ungloved

**By appointing two new ministers for the North of Ireland and transferring responsibility for combating the IRA in Britain from the Special Branch to MI5, the British state has shown that it is about to strike the nationalist people of occupied Ireland with intensified ferocity. The ultimate target is the destruction of the Irish Republican Army and thereby the surrender of the Irish national liberation struggle. TREVOR RAYNE reports.**

After over a decade of stalemate, with sporadic and diminishing mass mobilisations, the British military and intelligence establishment believe that the nationalist population is now susceptible to such a blow and can be demoralised to the point of rejecting its revolutionary fighters.

Sir Patrick Mayhew, the new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and Michael Mates, Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office, have careers tied to the military and particularly to its war in Ireland. Their records reveal a willingness to apply the most brutal repression combined with the suppression of legal and political rights in dealing with Ireland.

Mayhew, MP for Tunbridge Wells and former Attorney General, served

with the Royal Armoured Corps and was a commander in the 4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards. As Attorney General he stopped details of the Stalker Report on shoot-to-kill questions being published and he refused, on grounds of 'national security' to press charges against RUC officers who tried to prevent the investigation taking place. He repeatedly clashed with the Dublin government over extradition and after the Father Patrick Ryan episode pressurised British television and press executives to adopt a lower-key approach to extradition cases. In 1987 Mayhew won an injunction against the televising of a reconstruction of the Birmingham Six appeal. It was eventually shown after the appeal had been dismissed. Mayhew knows well the role of manipula-

ting the law and controlling information as components of counter-insurgency strategy.

Michael Mates, MP for East Hampshire, served with the Queen's Dragoon Guards and as a military adviser to the Stormont government. He was chairman of the All-Party Anglo-Irish Group from 1979 and chairman of the House of Commons Select Committee on Defence. He supports the return of the death penalty and said that the British Army is 'fighting terrorism with one hand tied behind its back'. Mates supported the Hillsborough Agreement as the best way of 'defeating terrorism'. Such talks as were conducted by Brooke will continue for the purposes of both immobilising opposition and deflecting political criticism, but the iron fist

will not shirk out of sensitivity to Dublin or SDLP embarrassment.

That the Special Branch has been replaced by somebody, anybody, is not surprising. Over the past 3 years there have been 72 IRA-related incidents in Britain; over 500 people have been detained under the PTA but just three convictions for conspiracy to cause explosions have been obtained. Scotland Yard argued that MI5 has no experience in presenting evidence in court. This would be laughable were it not for the growing list of frame-ups.

If anyone wants to know what the British state is and what it is capable of to maintain its rule in Ireland, they should examine what is known of MI5.

MI5 is formally under the Home Secretary. Its official purpose is to provide intelligence on domestic 'subversion' and foreign intelligence services in Britain and the North of Ireland. In 1969 MI5 was sent to sort out military intelligence in the North. When the Harold Wilson Labour government was elected in 1974, MI5 began a campaign of systematic destabilisation. It had opposed the phasing-out of internment and fabricated figures on released detainees returning to guerrilla activities. It joined with the Loyalist paramilitaries to bring down the power-sharing Executive in May 1974. By 1975 MI5 had

taken control of intelligence in the North. They brought in the SAS and jointly organised civilian killings, political assassinations, bombings and as Fred Holroyd testifies, dirty propaganda.

During the Labour government years 1974-79, the killing of Catholic civilians by Loyalist paramilitaries reached death squad proportions. 330 civilians were killed, 293 during 1974-6, the vast majority Catholics. The government announcement that MI5 has 'lead responsibility' for combating the IRA in mainland Britain, invariably means the elevation of their role in the occupied Six Counties. There is no other way that they could operate with any hope of effectiveness. This means more assassinations: they participated in the SAS murder of the Gibraltar 3 in 1988. More dirty tricks: they covered up the Kinvara Boys Home scandal. More psychological operations: they have direct access to owners and agents in the major media. It also means a continuation of the framing and detention of innocents: it was MI5 that orchestrated the round-up of Palestinians and others from the Middle East during the Gulf War.

In the coming period the resistance of the Irish people is likely to be tested once more. British imperialism is determined to end the stalemate. ■